



A GUIDE TO  
SHAKESPEARE'S  
JULIUS CÆSAR

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# CONTENTS

## Section I: Annotations

	PAGE.
1. Passages from Act I	... 1
2. „ II	... 29
3. „ III	... 49
4. „ IV	... 58
5. „ V	... 67

## Section II: Substance & Significance of Scenes

I. Act I Scene I	... 74
II. „ II	... 75
III. „ III	... 78
IV. Brutus's Soliloquy in Act II Scene I	... 79
V. Act II Scene I	... 81
VI. Act III Scene I*	... 82
VII. Brutus's Funeral Speech	... 86
VIII. Antony's Funeral Speech*	... 87
IX. Act IV Scene III	... 90
X. The Plot-Construction of 'Julius Cæsar'	... 92

## Section III: Essays on Character, Answers to University Questions, etc.

I. Character of Cæsar	... 95
II. 'Cæsar has become no little of a braggart and has anything but attractive	



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
characteristics. He produces the impression of an invalid. He is superstitious. He rejoices in flattery, talks arrogantly, boasts of his firmness and is for ever wavering.' Discuss *	... 98
III. 'Cæsar is weak, vacillating, failing both in mind and body. He is ironically depicted in his dotage.' Discuss *	... 98
IV. Examine the statement that Shakespeare's representation of Cæsar may be described as rather one-sided or inadequate than untrue *	... 99
V. Consider whether Cæsar as represented by Shakespeare deserves his doom *	... 101
VI. Describe the scene of Cæsar's death, and show what traits of his character are revealed in it *	... 102
VII. Character of Brutus	... 102
VIII. 'Brutus's simplicity of character makes him an easy victim to designing men.' Discuss *	... 106
IX. What qualities in Brutus's character contributed to the overthrow of his cause? *	... 108
X. 'In the moral elevation of Brutus is the essence of the tragedy.' Discuss	... 108
XI. Consider whether Brutus is the central figure in 'Julius Cæsar' *	... 110
XII. What are the ideals and motives that cause Brutus to resolve upon the destruction of Cæsar? *	... 112
XIII. Character of Cassius	... 113

	PAGE
XIV. In a soliloquy Cassius says that Brutus would act nobly, if he were not under the influence of a certain person, and he adds that noble men should ever 'keep with their likes.' Dr. Johnson understood Cassius to be referring to Cæsar's influence over Brutus. Some modern commentators understand Cassius to refer to his own influence over Brutus. Give reasons for preferring one view or other *	... 116.
XV. 'We are tempted, at first sight, to suppose that Cassius was merely an ill-tempered man with a personal grudge against Cæsar, and that he assumed the airs of a patriot to inveigle others into joining the conspiracy.' Discuss *	... 118
XVI. Character of Antony	... 120
XVII. Character of Portia *	... 122
XVIII. Character of the Citizens *	... 124.
XIX. How are the characters of the principal actors indicated in the scene in which Cæsar is murdered? *	... 125.
XX. How is the character of Brutus in 'Julius Cæsar' brought out by contrast with Cassius? *	... 126.
XXI. 'The failure of Brutus as a political leader is brought into clear light by the contrast between him and Cassius who is in every way better fitted to be the leader of the conspiracy.' Discuss *	... 128
XXII. Contrast between Antony and Brutus *	... 130.
XXIII. Discuss the part played by Antony *	... 132:

	PAGE
XXIV. Contrast the speeches of Brutus and Antony in the pulpit in the Forum *	... 133
XXV. What part is played by women in the play? *	... 136
XXVI. Motives of the various Conspirators in joining the plot *	... 138
XXVII. What ends are served by the introduction of supernatural occurrences into 'Julius Cæsar'? *	... 141
XXVIII. What is the value of portents and omens in 'Julius Cæsar'? Compare the tone of Casca when he describes the games with the tone of his speeches in the 'tempest dropping fire.' *	... 143
XXIX. Quote and discuss any examples of dramatic irony in 'Julius Cæsar' *	... 143
XXX. The play of 'Julius Cæsar' is pervaded by the notion of irresistible destiny *	... 145
XXXI. Who is the hero of the play? Or— Examine the appropriateness of the title of the play *	... 147

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\* University Question.

SHAKESPEARE  
JULIUS CÆSAR

SECTION I

ANNOTATIONS

ACT I SCENE I

- (1) **know you not  
Being mechanical, you ought not walk  
Upon a labouring day without the sign  
Of your profession ?** [2-5]

In the opening scene of the play some Roman citizens are represented as making a holiday to see Cæsar and to rejoice in his triumph. The Tribunes, Marullus and Flavius are enraged at this sight, for they hate Cæsar. In the above passage Flavius rebukes the citizens. He asks them if they do not know that, being labourers, they ought not to go about on a working day like that without the mark of their profession, without the symbol of their trade. In other words, it is not a holiday and the labourers have no right to appear in their best attire.

The words 'mechanical' and 'labouring' are used in the sense of 'mechanics' (labourers) and 'working' respectively. The commoners to whom the words are addressed belong to trades like carpentry, and they have only some specified holidays. In the time of Shakespeare, English artisans had some recognized signs of arms, as for example, the carpenter's rule. Shakespeare transfers this custom to the ancient Roman labourers.

The omission of 'to' between 'not' and 'walk' occurs only here in Shakespeare.

The passage reveals the envious disposition of Flavius. He *appears* to be angry at the violation of a rule or custom, but in truth he does not like the celebration of Cæsar's victory.

- (2) **Nay, I beseech you, sir, be not out with me: yet, if  
you be out, sir, I can mend you.** [ 18-9 ]

In the opening scene, some commoners are represented as making a holiday to see Cæsar and to rejoice in his triumph. The Tribunes are enraged at the sight and rebuke the people. Marullus asks the second commoner to what trade he belongs and receives an ambiguous reply which adds to his wrath. He calls him a naughty knave, but the commoner coolly asks the Tribune not to be out, not to be angry with him. If he should be out in spite of the warning he can mend him, he can correct him.

The commoner is a cobbler by profession, and he plays on the word 'out' when he repeats it. He means that if Marullus should be out at heels, if his shoes are in need of mending, he can easily restore them. Of course the enraged Tribune does not understand the pun and becomes angrier than before.

The cool and clever manner in which the commoner meets the wrath of Marullus is highly diverting.

- (3) **And do you now put on your best attire?  
And do you now cull out a holiday?  
And do you now strew flowers in his way  
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?**  
[ 51-4 ]

The Tribunes, Marullus and Flavius get extremely enraged when they see some commoners making a holiday to see Cæsar and to rejoice in his triumph. They rebuke them with the utmost severity and accuse them of inconstancy and ingratitude. Marullus describes how on occasions without number they had rejoiced over the triumphal entries of their

distinguished countryman, Pompey, and greeted him with wild enthusiasm. Now Julius Cæsar is returning to Rome after vanquishing the sons of this very Pompey. Is it proper, asks Marullus, to rejoice on an occasion like this, to dress oneself in the best garments, to make a holiday, to scatter flowers in the way of the man who has overthrown the sons of no less a man than Pompey? Marullus wants to make the commoners feel that their behaviour is absurd and ungrateful in the extreme, and that the victory of Cæsar is to be lamented rather than celebrated.

*cull out a holiday*, pick out or choose a holiday. It is in fact a 'labouring day,' which the commoners have converted into a holiday. *Pompey's blood*, those of the same blood as Pompey, that is, the sons of Pompey, surnamed 'the Great,' is one of the greatest generals and statesmen of ancient Rome. His sons led the Republicans against Cæsar in the Battle of Munda, but were overthrown. It is to this battle that Shakespeare alludes.

Marullus repeats 'do you now' again and again in order to appeal with effect. He cannot however be said to sympathize with the people. He is actuated solely by envy of Cæsar.

(4) **See, whether their basest metal be not moved;  
They vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness.**

[65-6]

Unable to bear the sight of the holiday-making commoners, Flavius and Marullus rebuke them. On innumerable occasions they had rejoiced over the victories of Pompey and almost worshipped him. To celebrate the defeat and destruction of the sons of this very hero is ingratitude. Thus speaks Marullus. Flavius adds to the same effect. The commoners are cut to the quick and disperse instantly. Flavius rejoices over the success of their appeal and asks his companion, to note how even the meanest of the group have been influenced by the arguments, and how all of them have gone back. Convinced of their guilt in celebrating Cæsar's victory over

'Pompey's blood,' they have fled back without uttering even a word in defence of themselves.

*basest metal*, 'metal' is used in the place of 'mettle,' and 'basest mettle' means 'very mean spirits.' Flavius means that even the dullest of the lot have been moved. *tongue-tied in their guiltiness*, unable to speak owing to their consciousness of guilt.

It is important to note the fickle behaviour of the commoners. Their character is revealed even more clearly as the play progresses.

- (5) **These growing feathers pluck'd from Caesar's  
wing  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men  
And keep us all in servile fearfulness. [75-8]**

Flavius and Marullus easily persuade the commoners to give up their ungrateful holiday-making and to go back and repent for their fault. Bent upon insulting Cæsar, Flavius asks Marullus to go to the Capitol and to remove all the ornaments from the statues of the man who is every day growing in power and importance. Marullus hesitates to carry out the bidding, but Flavius insists upon it. He speaks metaphorically and says that by plucking from Cæsar's wing these feathers that are now growing so fast, they will oblige him to be satisfied with a normal flight. Otherwise, that is, if the growing feathers are not plucked, he would fly to an extraordinary height and inspire his fellowmen with slavish dread of him. Flavius means that the ambition of Julius Cæsar can be curbed only by depriving him of the various honours done to him. If on the other hand it is allowed to have an undisturbed sway, Cæsar will become supreme and reduce his countrymen to abject slavery.

The metaphor is drawn from falconry, and 'pitch' is a term meaning the height to which the falcon soars.

The passage clearly reveals the spirit of hatred that is abroad against Cæsar. The truth about the motives of the Tribunes in rebuking the commoners is now quite clear.

## ACT I SCENE II

- (6) **Forget not, in your speed Antonius,  
To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,  
The barren, touched in this holy chase,  
Shake off their sterile curse.** [6-9]

The ancient Roman festival of Lupercalia is celebrated with all pomp. Mark Antony is about to begin the usual 'course,' when Cæsar who presides over the ceremonies asks him not to fail to touch Calpurnia. He must not, in his speed, forget to touch Cæsar's wife, for it is the opinion of the venerable section of the Romans that barren women are redeemed from the curse of sterility by being touched during the holy course.

The importance of the passage consists in the light it throws on the character of Cæsar. His extreme superstition is the very first quality that is illustrated by the dramatist. He tells Antony to leave no ceremony out. In all his references to Cæsar, Shakespeare usually employs language of superlative praise. In this play alone he paints him in unfavourable colours because he has to alienate the sympathy of the audience from him, and to prepare for his assassination.

- (7) **If it be aught toward the general good,  
Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,  
And I will look on both indifferently.** [85-7]

When Cassius finds himself alone in the company of Brutus, he decides to sound his mind in regard to the growing supremacy of Cæsar. It is however a delicate and momentous topic, and the skilful Cassius begins by saying that Brutus does not see himself. In this manner he proceeds for a long time when Brutus grows impatient and desires to know the particular



purpose for which he is detained. Hence he asks him what he has got to tell him. If what he has to disclose should contribute to the public good of Rome, he will carry it out even if it should cost his life, for he values the cause of honour much more than he fears death. It is a matter of honour for him to work for the welfare of Rome, and he will sacrifice even his life in performing what honour dictates.

*aught towards the general good*, anything which tends to the common welfare. *honour*, cause of honour, not glory or reputation as taken by some editors. *indifferently*, without concern.

As an illustration of Brutus's character, of his devotion to Rome and readiness to do his utmost for her welfare, the passage is important.

(8) **I had as lief not be as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself.** [95-6]

At the bidding of Brutus, Cassius begins to unfold the reason for which he has been detaining him. Honour, he says, is the subject of his story. He does not know how his fellow-countrymen are feeling over their lot; but for his own part he would as willingly not be at all, not live at all as live in dread of one who is like himself. Cassius means that Cæsar is a mortal like himself and that death is preferable to living in dread of Cæsar.

*as lief*, as willingly, as readily. *such a thing*, a mortal like myself, sc. Cæsar.

The lines illustrate the character of Cassius and bear out the truth of Cæsar's observation:—

Such men as he be never at heart's ease  
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves.

Cæsar has, according to Cassius, become so supreme that others have to dread him. This is to him intolerable.

- (9) **I, as Æneas, our great ancestor,  
Did from the flames of Troy upon his shoulder  
The old Anchises bear, so from the waves of Tiber  
Did I the tired Cæsar. And this man  
Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
A wretched creature and must bend his body,  
If Cæsar carelessly but nod on him. [ 112-18 ]**

Cassius employs various arguments in order to disparage Cæsar and to inflame Brutus against him. Among other things he relates the story of a swimming competition which had taken place between him and Cæsar. On one occasion, when the river Tiber was in full flood, Cæsar summoned Cassius to swim with him in the angry flood up to a certain point. But before reaching the destination, Cæsar got exhausted and cried to his companion to rescue him. At once Cassius carried the tired Cæsar from the waves of the Tiber in the same manner as Æneas, the ancestor of the Romans, bore the aged Anchises upon his shoulder and rescued him from the fire which destroyed Troy. And this very man (who at one time cried for Cassius's help) has now become a god, and Cassius is (compared with Cæsar) a despicable being. He has to bow low before him if Cæsar is 'but so condescending as to throw a careless nod at him.'

as *Æneas, etc.*, The dramatist alludes to the 'Æneid', the masterpiece of the Roman epic poet, Virgil. After the destruction of Troy by the Greeks, Æneas carried his father Anchises out of the burning city, sailed away to the west and ultimately founded a kingdom in Italy. Romulus, the founder of Rome, was descended from Æneas who is, on this account, described by Cassius as 'our great ancestor.'

The skill of Cassius in pointing out the weakness of Cæsar and contrasting it with his unique position is noteworthy.

- (10) **His coward lips did from their colour fly,  
And that same eye whose bend doth awe the world,  
Did lose his lustre. [ 122-24 ]**

In order to disparage Cæsar and inflame Brutus against him, Cassius relates some episodes which redound to the discredit of Cæsar. For example, when Cæsar was in Spain he had an attack of fever and then he had also a fit of epilepsy. On that occasion he shook and trembled awfully. The colour, the red tint, left his lips. Cassius alludes to a coward abandoning his colours, deserting the standard of the army to which he belongs. The red tint is spoken of as the colour from which the frightened lips take flight. Again, adds Cassius, that very eye which strikes terror into the world lost its lustre on that occasion.

*bend*, look. *his lustre*, its lustre. 'His' was originally the genitive of 'it' no less than of 'he.'

Cassius's skill in pointing out the weaknesses of Cæsar and contrasting them with his mighty position is noteworthy. But it must not be forgotten that the points selected by him are in reality trifles.

(11)                    **Ye gods! it doth amaze me  
A man of such a feeble temper should  
So get the start of the majestic world  
And bear the palm alone.**                    [128-31]

Cassius disparages Cæsar by relating a number of instances which illustrate his weakness. He describes the swimming competition in the Tiber in which he cried for help, and refers to his behaviour in Spain when he had an attack of fever and fell into an epileptic fit. He concludes by exclaiming to the gods that he is astonished to find that a man of such a weak constitution should outstrip the whole of mankind and carry off the prize. The lofty and unique power wielded by Cæsar is astonishingly undeserved, for he is a man of a very weak constitution.

*temper*, constitution, temperament. *get the start of*, outstrip, obtain an advantage over. The allusion is to the famous Olympic games held in ancient Greece.

*the majestic world*, the Roman empire, which the Romans proudly looked upon as comprising the whole globe. The phrase is in contrast to "a man of such a feeble temper." *the palm*, the prize.

Cassius refers to the sole and sovereign sway wielded by Cæsar, and alludes to the Olympic games in which palm branches were placed in the hands of the victors as a token of reward.

(12) **Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.**

[135-38]

In order to inflame Brutus against Cæsar who has become a god, Cassius disparages the great conqueror by giving several instances of his feeble temper. He expresses his astonishment at the enormous authority wielded by a man of such a temperament. But notwithstanding his powerful eloquence, Brutus seems to be rather cold. Cassius grows impatient and hence addresses Brutus, 'Why, man.' Cæsar, says Cassius, walks about the narrow world like a gigantic statue, and all other Romans, even the choicest of them, have to walk beneath his mighty legs and timidly look about as though they want 'to find a grave in which they might lie down and hide the dishonour they felt in being so slavish to the will of one man.' They are so wretched that they do not even dare to hope for an honourable rest after life.

*the narrow world*, The wide world appears to Cæsar to be but a tiny strip of land, he being so ambitious.

*a Colossus*, The allusion is to the Colossus of Rhodes. It is a mighty statue of Apollo between the legs of which a man could walk without any difficulty. Hence the expression 'colossal' which means huge.

In this utterance particularly Cassius reveals that Cæsar's opinion of him as an envious man is quite true.

- (13) **Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.**

[ 139-41 ]

In order to inflame Brutus against Cæsar, Cassius disparages Cæsar in an eloquent and elaborate speech. He contrasts the feeble temper of the man with the unique power wielded by him, and laments the wretchedness of all other Romans who 'walk under his huge legs and peep about to find dishonourable graves.'

He emphasizes his description by pointing out that the Romans are themselves responsible for their extreme misery. At one time or another in their lives men are able to control their destinies. They are the architects of their fortune. If the Romans are in a wretched position, if they are underlings or inferiors, they have to blame themselves and not their stars. Of their own accord, and not owing to any preordained fate they have allowed Cæsar to become a god and reduce them all to ciphers.

*not in our stars*, The reference is to the belief in astrology which was common in England during Shakespeare's time. Cassius was an Epicurean philosopher and believed that the gods were careless of mankind. Hence he ridicules the belief in astrology. *underlings*, 'inferiors, and contentedly inferiors'

Cassius's powerful speech would seem to imply that if only the Romans make up their minds to be masters of their fates they can make Cæsar fly an ordinary pitch, and regain their rights.

- (14) **Age, thou art sham'd !  
Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods !  
When went there by an age, since the great flood,  
But it was fam'd with more than with one man ?**

[ 150-53 ]

Cassius detests the sole and sovereign sway of Cæsar. He sees absolutely no difference between Cæsar and Brutus. For the matter of that he sees in Cæsar nothing more than an average mortal. Yet he 'bestrides the narrow world like a Colossus.' This is because the rest of the Romans are underlings. Hence Cassius exclaims that the age or the period of Cæsar's supremacy is a disgrace on account of the enormous and unprecedented power wielded by a single man. Evidently Rome is no longer producing those men of spirit, those noble bloods, for whom she was once famous. Ever since the creation of the world there has been no age like the present. At all times Rome has been made famous by a number of great men, and never by a single individual as at present. This is a disgrace.

*the breed of noble bloods*, the production of men of mettle. *the great flood*, the allusion is to the flood in Greek mythology which destroyed all mankind except Deucalion, King of Pthia, in Thessaly, and his wife Pyrrha. The world was repopled from them. *famed with more than with one man*, made famous by a number of worthies. The greatness of Rome was always associated with several of her children.

The exclamations as well as the question uttered by Cassius are very powerful indeed.

**(15) Now is it Rome indeed and room enough,  
When there is in it but one only man.**

[ 156-57 ]

Cassius detests the sole sway of Cæsar in Rome. Never since the creation of the world has Rome been famed with 'one only man.' At present, however, an unprecedented change has happened, and a single individual has become all-powerful. One might wonder, says Cassius, whether indeed it is Rome in which such a singular thing has taken place. Formerly it contained a number of great men, but now it seems to have room enough for one only. Cassius means that Cæsar is the only person of moment in Rome at present, and that the rest are underlings, mere ciphers.

*is it Rome indeed, etc.*, in the time of Shakespeare 'room' and 'Rome' had the same pronunciation, and thus there is a pun in the expression. *one only man*, one man alone.

The appeal of Cassius is remarkably powerful.

- (16) **O, you and I have heard our fathers say,  
There was a Brutus once that would have brook'd  
The eternal devil to keep his state in Rome  
As easily as a king.** [158-61]

Cassius wants to inflame Brutus against Cæsar who has become a god and enjoys sole sway in Rome. He disparages Cæsar by referring to some proofs of his weak constitution, and emphasizes his argument by pointing out that never since the creation of the world has any Roman been allowed to wield so much power as Cæsar. Finally Cassius appeals to the family honour of Brutus by recounting how both of them had been told by their parents that at one time in the past there was a Brutus who would have endured the devil to wield supreme power in Rome as easily as he would have tolerated a king. That is to say, he had horror for kingship and would not tolerate it.

*a Brutus*, the allusion is to Lucius Junius Brutus who valiantly expelled the ancient Roman monarchs, the Tarquins, put an end to monarchy, and was elected the first consul. On this account the Romans caused his statue of brass to be set up in the Capitol, with the images of the kings, holding a naked sword in his hand.

*eternal devil*, perhaps we should have 'infernal devil.' It has however been supposed that Cassius means by 'eternal devil to keep his state,' the devil to keep his state eternally, *to keep his state*, to occupy such a supreme eminence as is his. *As easily, i.e.*, not easily at all. *as a king*, Cassius means that Cæsar's authority is so great that he may be regarded as an uncrowned king.

In this powerful speech, Cassius seems to imply that Marcus Brutus must prove himself worthy of his illustrious ancestor by putting down the supremacy of Cæsar and preserving Rome in its time-honoured character of a republic.

- (17) **That you do love me, I am nothing jealous ;  
What you would work me to, I have some aim.**  
[ 162-63 ]

In a powerful speech, Cassius appeals to Brutus to think of the lamentable condition of Rome, especially of the unique and dangerous power wielded by Cæsar. Brutus begins his reply with the above lines which cannot be understood without a reference to the protestations of Cassius at the beginning of the interview. When Cassius regretted that the noble Brutus was not aware of his hidden worthiness and promised to make him realize it, Brutus instantly asked him whether it was his idea to flatter him. Cassius protested that he was not 'a common laugher' and that his love and regard for Brutus were quite sincere.

It is to this assertion that Brutus alludes at the beginning of his reply. He says that he has no doubt whatever that Cassius loves him. He can also guess to some extent what Cassius wants to induce him to do. That is to say, he has some idea of the design of Cassius against Cæsar and of the part he desires him to take in it.

*nothing*, not in the least. *jealous*, suspicious, doubtful. *work me*, induce me. *some aim*, some conjecture or idea.

The lines reveal the effect of the appeal of Cassius and foreshadow Brutus's part in the conspiracy.

- (18) **Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;  
He thinks too much : such men are dangerous.**  
[ 193-94 ]

The long and important conversation between Cassius and Brutus draws to an end, and at the same instant the games



conducted in honour of the Lupercalia are over. Cæsar is coming back and observes Cassius in the company of Brutus. Then he calls Antony to his side and expresses his abhorrence of Cassius. Cassius has a lean and hungry look. He appears thin and greedy. He meditates too much. Men of such a type are dangerous. Such is the description Cæsar gives of Cassius. It is indeed a striking coincidence that Cæsar's suspicions are directed against a person who has just now disparaged him so completely and condemned his power so strongly.

*Yond*, is properly an adverb. In the early editions of Shakespeare we have both 'yon' and 'yond' as demonstrative adjectives.

According to Plutarch, Cæsar includes Brutus also in his description. Shakespeare leaves out Brutus, for it would not be consistent with that universal esteem and trust in which he is held by everyone in the play.

**(19) Yet if my name were liable to fear,  
I do not know the man I should avoid  
So soon as that spare Cassius. [198-200]**

The games conducted in honour of the Lupercalia are over, and Cæsar is returning with his train. On observing Cassius in the company of Brutus, Cæsar confides to Antony his opinion of the appearance and character of Cassius. Antony asks Cæsar not to fear him and Cæsar replies that he does not. If, however, his name, that is, he who bears the great name of Cæsar, should be subject to fear, the first person he would try to avoid as a source of danger, would be that spare, lean Cassius. Cæsar means that fear is quite foreign to his nature, but if it should have any influence on him, the first person he would shun would be Cassius.

*If my name*, if I, who bear the name celebrated throughout the world. *liable to*, capable of.

These lines contain one of the many arrogant touches given to Cæsar's portrait in the play. Cæsar claims an almost superhuman immunity from human frailties.

- (20) **Such men as he be never at heart's ease  
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,  
And therefore are they very dangerous.**

[207-209]

The games conducted in honour of the Lupercalia are over, and Cæsar returns with his train. On observing Cassius at a distance he confides to Antony his opinion of the appearance and character of Cassius. He has a lean and hungry look, thinks too much, reads voraciously, observes keenly and profoundly, likes neither plays nor music, and smiles but seldom. Men of such a description will find it impossible to be at rest, to remain contented, when they find anybody superior to themselves. In a word, they will be envious and dissatisfied and are therefore dangerous in the highest degree.

It is a striking coincidence that Cæsar gives so accurate a description of a man who has just given abundant expression to his envy of Cæsar.

- (21) **No, Caesar hath it not; but you and I,  
And honest Casca, we have the falling-sickness.**

[253-54]

Casca returns after attending the games conducted in honour of the Lupercalia. Brutus and Cassius detain him to know what happened during the games. Casca gives a characteristic account of the three occasions on which Antony offered a crown to Cæsar. Incidentally he mentions how Cæsar swooned, how he fell down at the market-place and foamed at mouth. Brutus then says that Cæsar hath the falling-sickness. Cassius strikes in and remarks that Cæsar does not suffer from the falling-sickness. It is Brutus, Casca, and himself that have the falling-sickness.

Brutus refers to the epileptic fits of Cæsar. Cassius employs the expression in a figurative sense, and means a sickness which has caused them all to fall so low and humble themselves in the dust before Cæsar. Cassius refers to the tyranny of Cæsar as a sickness which has seized hold of the Romans and hurled them to the dust.

Thus Cassius avails himself of every occasion to condemn the tyranny of Cæsar and to inflame his hearers against him.

**(22) An I had been a man of any occupation, if I would not have taken him at a word, I would I might go to hell among the rogues. [264-66]**

At the request of Brutus and Cassius, Casca describes Antony's offer of the kingly crown to Cæsar before the large gathering assembled for the Lupercalian celebration. The crown was repeatedly offered and repeatedly rejected, and the rejections were hailed with wild shouts and applause. When Cæsar observed the boisterous mirth of the people, he too behaved in a strange and undignified manner. He asked Casca to open his shirt and bade the common people cut his throat.

Commenting on this behaviour, Casca says that it was unfortunate that he did not belong to the crowd of artisans to whom Cæsar offered his throat. Had he been a mechanic he would surely have taken Cæsar at his word, and instantly carried it out. Had he failed to do so he would be prepared to suffer in hell.

It has been aptly suggested that by the phrase 'a man of any occupation' Casca means not only 'a mechanic, an artisan', but 'a practical man, a man of business, quick to seize an opportunity when it occurred.' 'An' is a shortened form of 'and' and was at one time used, as here, to mean 'if.' 'At a word' is used in the sense of 'at his word,' *i.e.*, according to what he said (though it might not be meant).

The cynical humour of Casca is noteworthy. He regrets having lost a chance to murder Cæsar!

- (23) **What a blunt fellow is this grown to be !  
He was quick metal when he went to school.**  
[293-94]

At the bidding of Brutus and Cassius, Casca gives a long and characteristic account of the three occasions when Antony offered a crown to Cæsar. When he departs, Brutus says he has become a very indifferent fellow, and is rude in manner. During his school-days, however, he was remarkable for his ready intelligence. In a word, Brutus notes a deterioration in the capacity of Casca.

But he is wrong in his estimate, and the penetrating Cassius corrects him at once by remarking that Casca is still quick metal in carrying out any noble or bold enterprise. His unpromising exterior is not a true index of his character.

This is the first occasion when the dramatist illustrates Brutus's want of insight into others and contrasts it with Cassius's wonderful penetration. The part played by Casca in the assassination scene bears out Cassius's estimate.

- (24) **therefore, it is meet  
That noble minds keep ever with their likes ;  
For who so firm that cannot be seduced ?**  
[308-10]

Brutus takes leave of Cassius, and Cassius soliloquises on the character of his noble kinsman with particular reference to the effect of his appeal about the wretched condition of Rome. Cassius is convinced that Brutus is undoubtedly noble and will surely respond to the call of honour. But still he feels that Brutus may be turned away by his associates from the path of honour which he will follow if left to himself. Cassius notes in Brutus a certain pliancy of temperament and hence remarks that it is quite proper that noble minds should

ever associate with those who are like themselves. This is proper and necessary because there is none so strong as cannot be deceived and led astray from the proper path. Cassius is afraid that Brutus will be led astray by Cæsar with whom he associates intimately. He would like Brutus to confine himself to the company of his 'likes,' that is, noble republicans like himself. In that case there will be no risk of his being seduced.

Some critics however have given a totally different interpretation not only to these lines, but to the entire soliloquy in which they occur. According to them, Cassius admits himself to be the evil genius of Brutus. He is made to mean that he observes Brutus to be noble but at the same time liable to be led astray from the path of nobility. This is clear to him from the fact that Brutus has readily responded to his arguments. Hence the propriety of noble people associating with men like themselves. Brutus has associated with a man who is not his 'like,' namely Cassius, and the result is that Cassius has seduced him.

This interpretation which makes out Cassius to be an avowed evil genius cannot hold. In the first place it does not fit in with the character of Cassius as is set forth in the rest of the play. 'It gives us in the first Act a Cassius who cannot possibly be reconciled with the Cassius of the fourth and fifth Acts.' Secondly, it is clearly contradicted by Plutarch who tells us that not only Cassius but several others were afraid that Brutus might be spoiled by the sweet enticements he received at the hands of Cæsar.

**(25) If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,  
He should not humour me. [ 312-13 ]**

In a famous soliloquy which appears in the second scene of the opening Act, Cassius reflects upon the character of Brutus. He has just appealed to him about the lamentable condition of Rome, of which Cæsar is the sole author, and he finds from the ready response of Brutus that he is quite

noble. Yet he is afraid because Brutus is somewhat pliant and might be led astray from the path of honour by the sweet blandishments of Cæsar. But if he were in Brutus's position, if Cæsar instead of 'bearing him hard' should love him, he (Cæsar) would not have the power to seduce him, to lead him astray. Cassius would not be under the spell of Cæsar's affection and would not therefore be seduced by him.

This interpretation which is supported by Dr. Johnson is in perfect agreement with the character of Cassius as is depicted in the rest of the play. It is also borne out by Plutarch who clearly says that Cassius and several other Romans were afraid that the honourable mettle of Brutus might be spoiled by the sweet blandishments of Cæsar. Yet several editors take 'He' in 'He should' to refer to Brutus and make Cassius mean that if he and Brutus were to change places, he (Brutus) would not be able to play upon him and turn him from the true bent of his mind. This would amount to a confession on Cassius's own part of being the evil genius of Brutus, which undoubtedly he is not.

Thus Dr. Johnson's interpretation is distinctly preferable. The character of Cassius cannot be properly understood, and the play itself cannot be justly appreciated if one fails to accept it.

#### ACT I SCENE III

- (26) **Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods  
Incenses them to send destruction.** [ 11-13 ]

The third scene of the opening Act produces a powerful effect because Shakespeare shows us 'the conspiracy gathering force against the background of the storm.' Casca is made to describe the portents, because he is immediately affected by what surrounds him. He is astonished at Cicero's calm manner and tells him that for his own part he has not seen a tempest of the type they are having that day. It is a tempest

dropping fire. Instead of a shower of rain, sleet, and hail, which is normal, they are having a shower of fire. Casca fears that a civil war is being fought in heaven, that the different powers and forces of heaven are quarrelling against one another. Or, perhaps the world, the race of man, has behaved insolently towards the gods and provoked them to send down swift and dreadful means of destruction.

Casca's behaviour on this occasion differs completely from his manner of narrating the events of the Lupercalia. Here he is truly excited and speaks with unmistakable sincerity. There he is 'a blunt fellow indeed,' as Brutus remarks.

**(27) And yesterday the bird of night did sit  
Even at noon-day upon the market-place,  
Hooting and shrieking. [ 26-8 ]**

In the third scene of the first Act Shakespeare shows the conspiracy gathering force against the background of the storm. Casca is made to describe the portents because he is immediately affected by what surrounds him. He relates to the unperturbed Cicero the several miracles he has witnessed that day. There has been a tempest which instead of dropping sleet, rain, and hail, dropped fire. Casca also came across a lion which looked at him fiercely but did not cause him any injury. Above all, on the day previous to the storm, the bird of night, the owl, was seen even at broad noon on the market-place and went on hooting and shrieking.

The owl is a bird of ill-omen and generally appears only during nights. Hence it is called the 'bird of night.' It is rarely seen abroad in the day time. Its appearance at broad noon would be particularly ominous.

The description of the portents by Casca fully indicates how much he is excited, and contrasts with his blunt manner while recounting the events of the Lupercalia.

**(28) When these prodigies  
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say  
'These are their reasons; they are natural.' [ 28-30 ]**

Casca who puts on an air of indifference and superiority in describing the behaviour of the crowd at the Lupercalian celebration is thoroughly unnerved by the abnormal happenings during the night preceding the ides of March. He goes about with his sword drawn and gives Cicero a vivid description of prodigies he has seen and heard of. He tells Cicero that the simultaneous occurrence of so many prodigies is a sure indication that something dreadful is about to overtake Rome. It will be absurd to regard the many marvels as quite natural or capable of explanation. They are certainly portents, and every Roman has reason to be horrified.

‘When.....conjointly meet’ means the occurring together of the marvels like the tempest dropping fire and the bird of night hooting and shrieking on the market-place even at noon-day.

There is some appropriateness in making Casca describe the prodigies. He is easily impressionable. His description of the Lupercalia is mere affectation.

(29) **But if you would consider the true cause  
Why all these fires, why all these gliding ghosts,  
Why birds and beasts, from quality and kind—  
Why old men, fools and children calculate.**

[62-5]

In the third scene of the opening Act of the play Shakespeare represents a terrible storm as an apt background for the conspiracy that is gathering force. While Casca is thoroughly affected by what surrounds him, Cassius shows himself to be a typical Epicurean sceptic who holds himself superior to Nature. When Casca expresses his horror, Cassius strangely tells him that it is a very pleasing night to honest men. He adds that if he would examine into the cause and significance of the unnatural and dreadful happenings of the day he would realize that they foreshadow some abnormal condition of things. If Casca would ‘consider the true cause why these fires, ghosts, birds and beasts (contrary to their func-



tions and nature), old men, fools, children—are all of them engaged in prophesying,' he would find out that they predict an unnatural state of things. Taking all the nouns, 'fires, ghosts...old men, fools, and children' as subjects to 'calculate' we must understand the first group 'fires...as beasts' being engaged in prophesying only so far as they are themselves the prodigies which supply the latter group, 'old men, fools, and children' with material for prophecy (calculation). Some editors make the line antithetic; the old men prove or behave like fools, and the children like wise old men. A few others read 'fool,' and regard it as a verb. But in whatever manner one may read the passage a certain confusion of thought will continue to exist. Considering the peculiar circumstances in which it is spoken the confusion is by no means inappropriate.

*from quality and kind, i.e., act differently from the nature of their species. Here 'kind' is used in the sense of 'nature.'*

*Calculate*:—prophesy, prognosticate.

**(30) Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol,  
A man no mightier than thyself or me  
In personal action, yet prodigious grown  
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.**

**[72-8]**

Casca comes across Cassius during the tempest and expresses his horror over the several strange 'eruptions' he has witnessed. Cassius on the other hand remains unperturbed and tells his terrified friend that if he would try to understand the cause and nature of the abnormal and horrible spectacles he has seen he would realize that they foreshadow an unnatural state of affairs. For his own part he could point out a man who bears a very close resemblance to the horrible night and thunders, lightens, opens graves and foars as the

lion in the Capitol. After all, he is not superior to either of them in personal action. He has however grown fearfully powerful like the unnatural outbreaks they have witnessed that night. Cassius refers to Cæsar, especially to his unbearable tyranny.

*thunders, lightens, etc.*, the words are to be taken figuratively. The nature and effects of Cæsar's tyranny are described in these strong terms. *opens graves*, enables the ghosts of the dead to walk the earth. *As doth...the Capitol*, Cassius refers to the lion Casca had met and of which he had spoken to Cicero. It has been suggested that while writing this description the poet had in his mind the lions kept in the Tower of London. *A man... in personal action*, 'A man no greater as an individual.' Cassius is pointing at Cæsar's physical qualities. *prodigious*, Portentous in the authority which he possesses and which foreshadows some evil likely to happen to the state. *eruptions, Outbreaks*.

Cassius's spirited description indicates the strength of his feeling against Cæsar. It is also remarkable that while Casca is immediately affected by what surrounds him, Cassius is quite calm and reveals himself to be a 'a typical Epicurean sceptic who holds himself superior to Nature.'

(31) **Let it be who it is : for Romans now**

**Have thews and limbs like to their ancestors :**

**But, woe the while ! our fathers' minds are dead,**

**And we are govern'd with our mothers' spirits ;**

**Our yoke and sufferance show us womanish.**

[ 80-84 ]

Casca comes across Cassius during the terrible tempest and expresses his feelings of horror while Cassius remains perfectly calm and declares that he can point out a man who, though an ordinary human being, has acquired enormous power and wields that power as fearfully and disastrously as the tempest. Casca readily understands that Cassius is referring to Cæsar and asks him accordingly. Cassius replies with

remarkable tact and force that it matters little who the person is. He will not name the tyrant, for Romans have lost their ancient love of liberty. They possess the limbs and the muscles of their forefathers, but alas for the time, they have lost their spirit of liberty. They have inherited the character of their mothers. Their slavery and the slavishness with which they bear it illustrate their feminine disposition.

*Let it be who it is*, Cassius's refusal to name the tyrant shows his caution. *for Romans now*, etc., In his description of the wretchedness of the Romans, Cassius appeals to the most sensitive part of Casca's nature, his sense of shame. *throws*, muscles, strength. *woe the while*, an imprecation upon the time. *sufferance*, patience, slavishness.

The skill of Cassius in appealing to the minds of others is noteworthy and brings out his insight and practical sagacity.

- (32) **I know where I will wear this dagger, then;  
Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius:  
Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most  
strong;  
Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat.** [89-92]

Casca meets Cassius during the 'tempest dropping fire' and expresses his feelings of horror, whereas the typical Epicurean philosopher reveals a rare calm and declares that he can point out a person who has become as terribly powerful as the storm they are witnessing. Casca understands the allusion to Cæsar and informs Cassius that the 'despot is to be crowned king on the morrow. Cassius is at once provoked and talks in the manner of a typical Roman of yore. If Cæsar is to receive the title of king, Cassius knows where to wear his dagger. He will do away with his life and thus achieve his emancipation from slavery. By endowing everyone with the power of achieving their freedom, by enabling them to commit suicide, the gods convert even the weak into the mighti-

est of men. By the same means again, the gods frustrate the designs of despots. In a word, Cassius describes suicide as a sure weapon by which one can escape the miseries of the world and achieve freedom.

Cassius's hatred of tyranny and love of liberty are manifest in the lines. He 'had as *lief* not be as live to be in awe of such a thing' as himself.

- (33) **Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,  
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,  
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit.**

[ 93-95 ]

When Cassius comes across Casca during the 'tempest dropping fire' and notices his horrified state, he enlarges upon the tyranny of Cæsar and likens the despot to the abnormal and fearful storm. Casca tells him that in all probability Cæsar would be crowned king on the morrow. This serves but to intensify the emotion of Cassius, and he declares that rather than live and endure the monarchy of Cæsar he would commit suicide and thus achieve his liberty from the wretched yoke. In this connection, he describes how the spirit of man is unconquerable, and how nothing on earth can hold it back when it is determined to be free. The body of man may be cast into, and confined in, a stony tower or within walls of beaten brass or in an airless dungeon. It may be held in fetters. But these have not the power to confine the *spirit* of man. It is under all circumstances invincible.

*beaten brass*, hammered into the greatest hardness and solidity. *Can be retentive to the strength of spirit*, Can imprison the spirit when determined to be free.

Cassius' hatred of tyranny and love of liberty are manifest in this spirited utterance. He had 'as *lief* not be as live to be in awe of such a thing' as himself.

- (34) **But life, being weary of these worldly bars,  
Never lacks power to dismiss itself.**

**If I know this, know all the world besides,  
That part of tyranny that I do bear  
I can shake off at pleasure.**

**[96-100]**

Cassius's fears about the growing supremacy of Cæsar are fanned into flame when Casca meets him and tells him that Cæsar is to be crowned king on the morrow. Cassius declares at once that he will commit suicide rather than live to endure the monarchical tyranny of Cæsar. Then he says in general terms how the spirit of man is always invincible. When one becomes sick of life and resolves to cast away the obstacles which stand in the way of liberty, one is never at a loss to get rid of oneself. By suicide one can at any time overcome all the hindrances to liberty. If this fact is understood by Cassius as well as by the rest of humanity, the tyranny that he is enduring can be got rid of at choice. That is to say, the tyranny of Cæsar can be avoided if all Romans should be determined upon avoiding it, if they should realize and act up to the invincibility of the spirit of man.

*Worldly bars*, the reference is to the stony tower, the airless dungeon, etc. These are bars or obstacles inflicted upon one's liberty by mankind. *Know all the world besides*, let all mankind realize.

Cassius's utterance is typical of an antique Roman. He had 'as lief not be as live to be in awe of such a thing' as himself.

**(35) Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf  
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:  
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.**

**[104-106]**

When Cassius learns from Casca that Cæsar is to be crowned king on the morrow, his love of liberty is kindled into blaze, and he declares that he will achieve his liberty by committing suicide. He adds that the spirit of men is ever invincible, and that Cæsar's tyranny could easily be defeated

if only Romans should be bent upon maintaining their liberty at any cost. But they have degenerated, and it is precisely because of their slavish mentality that Cæsar has succeeded in becoming the monarch of all he surveys. Poor man, he would not be so fearful, so autocratic, but for the fact that he finds the people to be mere sheep, to be inclined to serfdom. He would not be terrible like the king of beasts but for the fact that the Romans of the day are mere boors and quite ignorant of what is really to their advantage. In a word, Cæsar's dangerous supremacy is altogether owing to the 'womanish' character of the Romans of the day.

*hinds*, possibly the poet intends a double meaning, stags, and rustic boors. *Poor man*, this usual expression of sympathy is here ironical.

The figurative language of Cassius adds much to the force of his appeal.

**(36) You speak to Casca, and to such a man  
That is no fleering tell-tale. Hold, my hand:  
Be factious for redress of all these griefs,  
And I will set this foot of mine as far  
As who goes farthest. [ 116-120 ]**

When Cassius meets Casca during the terrible tempest, he likens it to the dangerous supremacy enjoyed by Cæsar and laments the slavish mentality of the Romans of the day. The Romans are willing bondmen, and hence the despotism of so vile a thing as Cæsar. Cassius suddenly stops this strain of utterance and remarks that perhaps he has been expressing his feelings to one who is quite happy in his slavery and who may carry tales against him to the person he has been condemning. Stung to the quick by this reproachful supposition Casca replies that Cassius has been speaking to Casca, that is, to one who is certainly not a willing bondman. He is no fleering tell-tale either. He is not one of those who grin with mischievous joy when they betray their friends. Cassius will stop his talk and take the hand of Casca. That hand will

associate with others and organise a faction for redressing the miseries just described. Casca will place his foot, *i.e.*, go as far as he who advances foremost in the cause. He will be second to none in his exertions to redress the 'griefs.'

*fleering*, grinning. *Hold*, enough, stop. *be factious*, Some take this to mean 'be active, energetic.' Others interpret 'organise a faction.' *griefs*, grievances.

The speech is quite characteristic of Casca and foreshadows his role in the play. He is the first to strike at Cæsar.

(37) **O, he sits high in all the people's hearts;  
And that which would appear offence in us,  
His countenance, like richest alchemy,  
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.**

[ 157-160 ]

Casca agrees to join the conspiracy, and then Cassius divulges to him how he has prevailed upon some of the noblest of Romans to lend their support to the cause. Speaking of Brutus in particular, he says that he is very nearly won over. Casca describes the universal esteem in which Brutus is held and points out how his participation would render the conspiracy a noble and worthy cause. He is held in great regard by everybody, and on this account, what would be looked upon as a crime if it were to be done by Casca, Cassius and others, would appear a virtuous deed if Brutus were to join in it. His countenance, his approval, would thus ennoble the attempt even as by means of alchemy, it was once thought possible to convert base metals into precious gold.

*countenance*, approval, the approving look of Brutus's eyes. *alchemy*, The early analysis of substances which aimed chiefly at the discovery of the philosophers' stone.

The passage emphasises the unique reputation of Brutus for his character, and the supreme need for his participation in the conspiracy.

## ACT II SCENE I

(38) **How that might change his nature, there's the question.**

**It is the bright day that brings forth the adder ;  
And that craves wary walking. [ 13-15 ]**

These lines form part of the soliloquy of Brutus at the opening of the second Act, which is very valuable as indicating his feelings and motives in conspiring against Cæsar. Brutus declares that there is nothing either in the past behaviour or in the present conduct of Cæsar which can be considered blameworthy, much less warrant the assassination which he has determined upon as the sole means of restoring Rome to liberty. But it is important to consider how Cæsar's disposition would be affected by his coronation. It is the bright day, the day of splendid sunshine, that causes the serpent to come out from its hole and sun itself. On this account, the bright day demands careful walking. Brutus means that prosperity calls forth the hidden weaknesses and vices of people, and that as a result one has to be extremely careful in conduct during prosperity. As regards Cæsar his 'bright day' may be said to dawn with his coronation, and perhaps he will reveal the 'adder' in him as soon as he realizes that he has nothing more to gain from the people.

The passage has almost become a proverb on account of the precious truth it expresses in fine, figurative language. Brutus's maxim in politics seems to be that prevention is better than cure, but he proceeds on strange and untenable premises and reveals how completely unfit he is for practical politics.

(39) **Crown him ? that ;—  
And then, I grant, we put a sting in him,  
That at his will he may do danger with. [ 15-17 ]**

[For stating the context, reproduce the first three sentences from the previous Annotation.]



Suppose that Cæsar is crowned, suppose that it is accomplished, then assuredly Cæsar is endowed with a sting or poison by means of which he will work havoc. Brutus means that once Cæsar is crowned king, he will have the temptation to abuse his authority. 'The words are said slowly with a pause between the two clauses, indicating Brutus's deliberation over the matter.'

[For comment upon the passage, reproduce the concluding sentence of the previous Annotation.]

- (40) **The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins  
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of  
Cæsar,  
I have not known when his affections sway'd  
More than his reason. [ 18-21 ]**

[For stating the context, reproduce the first three sentences from Annotation 38.]

Greatness becomes a source of wrong, when power is exercised without feeling for others. The misuse of an exalted place is seen when it separates sympathetic consideration from the possession of authority. But in regard to Cæsar, says Brutus, his affections have never swayed more than his reason. His passions, his impulses, have always been in strict subordination to his reason. In a word, he has been a just and reasonable administrator.

*Remorse*, pity, not compunction as it means now.

In spite of this honest conviction, Brutus joins the conspiracy because he is afraid the bright day will bring forth the adder. Indeed, Brutus reveals a lamentable unfitness for the sphere of practical politics.

- (41) **But 'tis a common proof,  
That lowliness is young ambition's ladder,  
Whereto the climber-upward turns his face;**

**But when he once attains the upmost round,  
He then unto the ladder turns his back,  
Looks in the clouds, scorning the base degrees  
By which he did ascend. So Caesar may:  
Then, lest he may, prevent.** [21-28]

[For stating the context, reproduce the first two sentences from Annotation 38.]

Cæsar has throughout been a just and reasonable ruler and administrator. But, argues Brutus, it is a matter of everyday experience that humility is the ladder or the means by which ambition still in its early stages hopes to mount upward. Those who have an ambition to realize, assume a modest demeanour in order to gain their object. This ladder of lowliness is fully regarded and preserved as long as they are engaged in climbing upward. But as soon as the highest step is reached, as soon as the ambition has been fully realized, these very people throw away the ladder, they abandon their assumed humility. They look in the clouds, they are lost in the contemplation of their own glory, and look down upon the lower steps of the ladder. Cæsar might behave likewise, might develop into a tyrant as soon as he is crowned. For fear he should do so, let him be done away with and thus deprived of the opportunity of doing so.

The argument of Brutus is quite true as a general maxim and has become proverbial. But his application of it to Cæsar reveals his lamentable unfitness for practical politics.

(42) **that what he is, augmented,  
Would run to these and these extremities:  
And therefore think him as a serpent's egg  
Which, hatch'd, would, as his kind, grow mis-  
chievous,  
And kill him in the shell.** [30-34]

These lines form the conclusion of the famous soliloquy in which Brutus expresses his motives in conspiring against

Cæsar. Cæsar's past conduct as well as his present behaviour cannot furnish even the least ground for justifying the conspiracy. But it is important to consider how his nature would be affected by the coronation, for it is the bright day that brings forth the adder. The conspiracy would, therefore, have to be explained and defended in the following fashion. Cæsar's present power, if still further increased by the coronation, would lead to such and such extreme lengths. He should therefore be looked upon as a serpent's egg, which as soon as it is hatched, would according to its nature grow mischievous and which it would be advisable to kill in the shell itself. That is to say, Cæsar would develop into a tyrant as soon as he is crowned and should be done away with before the event.

*these and these*, Brutus has in mind various extremities but does not indicate them. *think him as*, consider him as. *as his kind*, as its nature is. *And kill him in the shell*, 'The short line is very effective. Its abrupt decisiveness marks the close of all Brutus's doubts. His purpose is now irrevocably fixed.'

The passage throws much light on the character of Brutus. On the one hand none can question the honesty of his opinion or feeling in regard to Cæsar. He does not hunt for a motive as Iago does. At the same time he reveals a lamentable unfitness for the sphere of practical politics.

- (43) **Between the acting of a dreadful thing  
And the first motion, all the interim is  
Like a phantasma, or a hideous dream:  
The genius and the mortal instruments  
Are then in council; and the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection.** [63-69]

Brutus has at length determined to put an end to the life of Julius Cæsar, for it seems to him impossible to restore Rome to liberty by any other means. He arrives at this conclusion after considerable deliberation, after a fierce conflict

between public duty and personal friendship, between loyalty to the state and loyalty to the friend. He describes in the above lines how restless and sleepless he has been ever since Cassius sharpened his animosity against Cæsar. The interval that elapses between the first impulse about a fearful act and the putting in action of it, that is, the time spent in thinking over a dreadful act and finally resolving to do it is in the nature of a phantasma or nightmare, is as horrible to endure as a hideous dream. The rational soul of man on the one hand and his passion on the other deliberate as to their course of action, and man is then paralyzed just as a kingdom is paralyzed when its different constituents are in a state of agitation.

*the acting of a dreadful thing*, putting in action of a dreadful thing. The passage does not mean the actual assassination of Cæsar, but the determination to do it. *motion*, impluse. *interim*, interval. *The genius and the mortal instruments*, 'This difficult and much discussed passage is best explained by understanding 'genius' to refer to the rational soul, the immortal and sovereign part of man; 'the mortal instruments,' on the other hand, are, not bodily organs, but the lower, unreasonable part, the functions or passions which attend upon the soul but perish with the body.' *then in council*, still deliberating. *the state of man like to a little kingdom*, Man's soul is compared to a kingdom. *the nature of an insurrection*, something like a revolution.

This passage is one of the purple patches of 'Julius Cæsar.'

(44)                      **Seek none, conspiracy ;**  
                              **Hide it in smiles and affability :**  
**For if thou path, thy native semblance on,**  
**Not Erebus itself were dim enough**  
**To hide thee from prevention.                      [81-5]**

On the night before the ides of March, Brutus is in his orchard contemplating on the conspiracy which he has decided to join. The boy Lucius brings him news that Cassius and a few others have come to see him. He is unable to say who

have followed Cassius, for they are in complete disguise. This piece of information makes Brutus comment upon the outward semblance of conspiracy. If the conspirators have thought it necessary to resort to disguise during night, one might well question what they would do during day. The best thing is not to seek any external mask at all. The conspirators must conceal their monstrous intentions by putting on a pleasing and affable countenance. If on the other hand they should proceed with their natural appearance, with an appearance which should proclaim their mind, not even hell would be found dark enough to conceal them and so protect them from being detected and thwarted in their designs. Brutus wants the conspirators to look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it.

*path*, used as a verb meaning 'walk.' *thy native semblance on*, wearing the appearance that properly belongs to you. *Erebus*, literally 'the covered place,' a classical name for the lower world. *from prevention*, from being frustrated through detection.

The speeches of Brutus have a peculiar grandeur and loftiness. They are the expressions of lofty sentiments in lofty language.

(45) **No, not an oath: if not the face of men,  
The sufferance of our souls, the time's abuse,—  
If these be motives weak, break off betimes,  
And every man hence to his idle bed;  
So let high-sighted tyranny range on,  
Till each man drop by lottery.** [114-19]

It is the night before the ides of March. Brutus finally decides to join the conspiracy against Cæsar. Soon after this important resolution is made, Cassius arrives with Casca, Decius and the rest of the conspirators, and Brutus shakes hands with them all. The practical Cassius suggests that they should swear the purpose they have determined upon, but Brutus instantly over-rules him. He is quite against an oath,

and declares that if the reproachful expression in men's faces shaming them (Brutus and the rest) to do their duty, the suffering that their own souls have endured, and the abuses which are prevalent then are not powerful enough to bind them all together, they had better dissolve their compact at once and retire to their beds, allowing the ambitious tyranny to last without any hindrance, until all people are done to death according to the tyrant's angry whim. Thus Brutus points out that an oath is absolutely unnecessary.

*the face of men*, Some editors have taken this expression to mean 'the troubled discontented looks of men,' but it seems better to render the meaning as the reproachful expression in men's faces shaming Brutus and the rest to do their duty. *the sufferance of our souls*, 'sufferance' is used in the sense of suffering, pangs. Brutus means the misery endured by their spirits. *the time's abuse*, 'time' means 'the existing condition,' 'the present regime,' and the whole expression means the abuses or injustices which prevail then. *weak*, sc. So weak as to necessitate an oath. *betimes*, at once, early. *idle bed*, 'idle' is a transferred epithet. *high-sighted tyranny range on*, The description contains a metaphor from falconry. 'Range' is a technical term applied to hawks flying in search of prey; but combined with the notion of the high-flying, keen-sighted falcon, towering above her prey, there is also the idea of the proud lofty look of the tyrant.

*by lottery*, as though by lot. Brutus implies that there would be nothing like reason or justice in the administration of a tyrant. He would do just as he pleases.

The passage reveals Brutus's lofty conception of the conspiracy. He considers it to be an obvious and imminent necessity, and as an important duty which does not need an oath. His description of Cæsar's rule as "high-sighted tyranny" is directly in opposition to what he has said just now in the famous soliloquy upon Cæsar's character, and lays bare his inconsistency.

- (46) **but do not stain**  
**The even virtue of our enterprise,**  
**Nor the insuppressive mettle of our spirits,**  
**To think that or our cause or our performance**  
**Did need an oath ; when every drop of blood**  
**That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,**  
**Is guilty of a several bastardy,**  
**If he do break the smallest particle**  
**Of any promise that hath pass'd from him.**  
[ 132-140 ]

Soon after Brutus makes up his mind to take part in the conspiracy against Cæsar, Cassius arrives with the rest of the conspirators, and Brutus shakes hands with them all. Cassius suggests that they would do well to swear their resolution but he is instantly over-ruled by Brutus. He is of opinion that an oath is unnecessary, and that bad causes alone need an oath. He, therefore, asks Cassius not to spoil the pure, unspotted virtue of their cause, nor call in question the insuppressible ardour of their spirits by thinking that either their enterprise or their performance stood in need of an oath. Brutus means that, on the one hand, the cause for which they have combined together is noble and pure, and that, on the other, the spirit they bring to support the cause is insuppressible. Therefore neither by reason of any flaw in their cause nor of any weakness in themselves do they require the further incentive of an oath. He continues and declares that every drop of blood in the body of a Roman shows that it is stained, that it is not the blood of a genuine Roman, if the person does not stand by his word to the fullest extent. In other words, a Roman of such a type loses his title to the name he bears.

*even*, unswerving, not subject to changes. *To think*, by thinking. *or our cause*, either our enterprise. *nobly bears*, bears as sign of his nobility. *several*, distinct.

Thus Brutus 'insists on the purity of their cause, its freedom from personal taint,' and reveals his lack of insight into the character of others.

- (47) **we shall find of him  
A shrewd contriver ; and, you know, his means,  
If he improve them, may well stretch so far  
As to annoy us all: [ 157-160 ]**

As soon as Brutus makes up his mind to take part in the conspiracy against Cæsar, Cassius and the rest of the conspirators arrive at his abode. During the discussion that follows, Decius Brutus asks whether none but Cæsar is to be done to death. Cassius appreciates the question and remarks that Antony who is affectionately devoted to Cæsar should not outlive him. They shall find in him a mischievous plotter, a malicious schemer. The means at his command, if he should turn them to the best account for his own purposes, will suffice to enable him to injure them seriously.

*shrewd*, used in the sense of mischievous.

This passage is one of the best illustrations of the almost prophetic insight of Cassius into others. His fears about Antony are fully realized in course of time, and the conspiracy is completely frustrated.

- (48) **To cut the head off and then hack the limbs,  
Like wrath in death and envy afterwards. [ 163-164 ]**

[For the context, reproduce the first three sentences of the previous Annotation.]

But Brutus opposes on the ground that if they should destroy more than one person, their conduct would appear 'too bloody.' Should they murder Cæsar and then proceed to do away with his adherents, like Antony, they would be behaving in a most wretched manner. It would appear as though they destroyed the head of a person in a fit of passion, and not satisfied with his death, gratified their malice by hacking his limbs. Brutus compares Cæsar's adherents to the limbs of a body. As he says a little later, he wants the conspirators to be considered as sacrificers and not as butchers.



The protest of Brutus is noble and is well brought home by the fine figure he employs. Yet his comparison of Antony to a limb of Cæsar's body reveals his lack of insight, and contrasts him with Cassius who is a great observer and looks quite through the deeds of men.

- (49) **We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar ;  
And in the spirit of men there is no blood :  
O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,  
And not dismember Caesar !** [167-170]

During the night previous to the ides of March, there takes place at Brutus's abode an elaborate discussion about various points in regard to the conspiracy against Cæsar. Among other things, Cassius urges that Antony should be done to death along with Cæsar, for he would prove a shrewd contriver. But Brutus opposes him on the ground that their course would then appear too bloody. He wants that they should be sacrificers, not butchers. After all they were in revolt against the spirit of Cæsar. 'Would that it were possible,' he adds, 'to get at Cæsar's spirit without dismembering Cæsar's body.' In a word, Brutus speaks of the death of Cæsar as a melancholy, inevitable thing.

*the spirit of Cæsar*, spirit (strongly emphasized). Note that it is the spirit of Cæsar which is ultimately victorious over those who now stand up against it. *come by*, reach, get at. *dismember*, disjoint.

Brutus's speech clearly indicates his conflict between his devotion to Cæsar and what he considers to be his duty to Rome. He is sincerely sorry that he is not able to come by Cæsar's spirit without dismembering him.

- (50) **Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,  
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds :** [173-4]

During the night previous to the ides of March there takes

place at Brutus's abode a discussion about the conspiracy against Cæsar. Cassius urges that Antony should be done to death along with Cæsar, for he would prove a shrewd contriver. But Brutus opposes on the ground that their course would then seem too bloody. He wants that they should be sacrificers, not butchers. They stand up only against the spirit of Cæsar, and it is a pity that they cannot kill the spirit without destroying the body. They should therefore kill him boldly, not wrathfully; they should cut him up as a dish fit for divine beings, not slaughter him as if he were a mean creature to be rudely thrown to the hounds.

The passage alludes to the customs of the chase of the day. The carcass of the hart was not thrown to the hounds but was reverently disposed of. Even so Cæsar's body was to be treated with reverence. In Act III, Antony also compares the murdered Cæsar to a deer 'strucken by many princes.'

The similes in the passage are beautiful. The lofty disposition of Brutus is also well brought out.

**(51) And let our hearts, as subtle masters do,  
Stir up their servants to an act of rage,  
And after seem to chide 'em. [175-177]**

During the night previous to the ides of March, there takes place at the abode of Brutus an elaborate discussion about the conspiracy. When Cassius urges that Antony should be done to death with Cæsar, Brutus protests, and he regrets that it is impossible to conquer the spirit of Cæsar without dismembering his body. Thus he is sorry that Cæsar has to be killed, and he tells the rest of the conspirators how to behave. Like cunning masters, their hearts must stimulate their bodily organs to perform their purpose. Afterwards, as soon as it is done, those very hearts must appear to be angry with the bodily organs and blame them. Cunning masters impel their servants to do some evil deed, but it is part of their diplomacy to scold those servants and put on an appearance of angry offence when they carry out their wicked orders.

*And let our hearts,* King John's behaviour to Hubert when he reports to him that he has done away with Prince Arthur is an instance in point. *their servants,* The fellows used to fulfil the wicked purpose. In the case of the conspirators, their 'mortal instruments' are their servants.

Brutus's reluctance to kill Cæsar is well brought out here.

(52) **for he loves to hear  
That unicorns may be betray'd with trees,  
And bears with glasses, elephants with holes,  
Lions with toils, and men with flatterers;  
But when I tell him he hates flatterers,  
He says he does, being then most flattered.**

[203-8]

During the night previous to the ides of March, there takes place at Brutus's abode an elaborate discussion in regard to the conspiracy against Cæsar. Towards the end Cassius expresses a doubt whether Cæsar who has grown superstitious of late would not be prevailed by the abnormal night to absent himself from the meeting of the Senate in the morning. In that case their conspiracy would be frustrated. But Decius Brutus asks him not to fear and assures him that he will prevail upon Cæsar to do as he bids. He says that Cæsar is fond of hearing how the mightiest of the brute creation may be deceived by the wiles employed against them, and of contrasting their liability to be thus misled with his own immunity from any such weaknesses. And when he is told that unlike ordinary men he is incapable of yielding to flattery he admits it 'though at that very moment he is being most signally deceived by flattery' in accepting the unique praise that is bestowed upon him.

*that unicorns may be betrayed, etc.,* 'The way to hunt a unicorn was to dodge round a tree when it charged, with the result that the unicorn fixed the horn in the tree and was at the hunter's mercy. A good way to hunt a bear was to hang up a mirror. The bear would then spend so much time in

front of the mirror that it was possible to get an easy shot. Elephants were captured with pitfalls covered with brush-wood. *toils*, nets.

Thus Cæsar is represented in an unfavourable light in order that his assassination might not appeal to the reader's sympathy.

- (53) **Let not our looks put on our purposes;  
But bear it as our Roman actors do,  
With untired spirits and formal constancy.**  
[ 225-28 ]

Cassius and the rest of the conspirators are about to leave Brutus when they receive from him this parting instruction as to how they should conduct themselves in the Senate. Brutus asks them not to betray their intentions, not to disclose their design of murdering Cæsar, by putting on anxious or terrible looks. They must look like the innocent flower but be the serpent under it. They must deport themselves like Roman actors with 'unflagging animation and dignified self-possession.' They must never lapse into their true selves.

*put on*, show. *bear it*, play your parts.

This is the second time that Brutus remarks upon the necessity of disguise. In his famous soliloquy he had spoken of 'smiles and affability' as a fit cloak for conspiracy.

- (54) **Enjoy the honey-heavy dew of slumber:  
Thou hast no figures nor no fantasies,  
Which busy care draws in the brains of men.**  
[ 230-33 ]

Cassius and the rest of the conspirators take leave of Brutus after an elaborate discussion of the conspiracy. Then, and not till then, does Brutus observe that his boy Lucius is asleep. This makes him reflect upon his own sleeplessness. Looking at Lucius he asks him to enjoy slumber which is at

once pleasant and profound. Lucius is free from those imaginary forms or mental images which are created in men's minds by anxiety.

*honey-heavy*, both sweet and deep. *figures*, unreal forms. *fantasies*, 'images formed in the mind.' *draws*, The metaphor in 'figures' is carried on in 'draws.'

The lines indicate one of the most charming qualities of Brutus—his affectionate tenderness for Lucius.

**(55) You have some sick offence within your mind,  
Which, by the right and virtue of my place,  
I ought to know of.** [ 268-70 ]

Portia notes a most striking change in the disposition of her husband and desires to know the cause of his restlessness. Brutus endeavours to explain away by saying that he is not in health. But the shrewd and loving wife tells him that no man would be awake and expose himself to the raw cold air of the early morning if he were unwell. She asserts that the sickness from which he is suffering is some mental trouble. And by virtue of being his wife she is entitled, she says, to know what the sick offence is.

*sick offence*, trouble which brings about sickness.

*by the right and virtue of my place*, the claim which I possess in virtue of my place (as your wife):

Portia is one of the best of Shakespeare's female characters. Her natural sensibility and tenderness of heart are well brought out by the passage.

**(56) Dwell I but in the suburbs  
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,  
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.** [ 285-87 ]

Portia notes a striking change in the disposition of her husband and fears he has some sick offence in his mind which

she is entitled to know in virtue of her place as his wife. Brutus tries to explain away when Portia asks him if she remains only in the outlying regions of his affection. Is she not in 'the citadel of his heart'? If she were only in the suburbs she is but the harlot of Brutus and not his wife.

*in the suburbs*, "Taken in connection with the following verse, 'Portia is Brutus's harlot,' etc., there is a further allusion to the suburbs of London and other large towns which appear to have been the dwelling-place of disorderly characters and loose women." *pleasure, affection.*

Portia's words touch Brutus to the quick and call forth his declaration that she is his 'true and honourable wife.'

(57) **I grant I am a woman; but, withal  
A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife:  
I grant I am a woman: but withal  
A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.  
Think you I am no stronger than my sex,  
Being so father'd and so husbanded? [292-97]**

Portia notes a striking change in the disposition of her lord and shrewdly conjectures that he is suffering from some sick offence within his mind. Brutus tries to explain away, but Portia is not satisfied and urges him to take her into his confidence. She appeals to him saying that though she is a woman she has not the weakness of her sex. She admits that she is a woman, but at the same time a woman whom one of such station as Brutus thought worthy to be his wife. Again she has a high and spotless renown as the daughter of Cato. Born to such a father and married to such a husband, she should not be thought to have in her the feminine weakness.

*Lord Brutus*, Though in the later portion of the play Titinius and Messala also style Brutus in this manner, the title has been commented upon as inappropriate in regard to an ancient Roman. *Cato's daughter*, the reference is to Marcus Porcius Cato surnamed, Uticensis, a famous stoic and a pro-

fessed pattern of Roman virtue. *no stronger*, sc. mentally and morally. *so father'd and so husbanded*, Nouns and adjectives were changed into verbs during the Elizabethan era with singular freedom.

Whatever her declaration about her strength, Portia proves to be a woman ultimately. But this does not detract from her charming character.

(58) **Soul of Rome !  
 Brave son, derived from honourable loins !  
 Thou, like an exorcist, has conjured up  
 My mortified spirit.** [ 321-24 ]

Ligarius calls upon Brutus, and Brutus is distressed to find that Ligarius is not well and tells him that he has chosen a very unfortunate moment to be ill. Brutus explains by saying that he has an honourable exploit to be achieved. Thereupon Ligarius declares that he cares a twopence for his ailment, and will readily assist in the undertaking. Brutus has exercised a magic influence on him. In virtue of his being the soul of Rome, and his honourable descent, he has, like a conjurer, stimulated his deadened spirit into full vigour.

*Soul of Rome*, the life of Rome. *loins*, ancestors. *exorcist*, exorciser, one who raises spirits. *mortified*, almost dead. ˆ

Ligarius's lofty tribute to Brutus is but one of the various testimonies that tend to prove the universal esteem in which Brutus is held by his countrymen.

(59) **But are not some whole that we must make sick ?**  
 [ 328 ]

Ligarius waits upon Brutus. Though ill, he discards his malady as soon as he learns that the 'soul of Rome' would like to have him in connection with an honourable exploit. Thereupon Brutus throws light upon the exploit he has in hand and promises that it will make sick men whole. He means the conspiracy against Cæsar, which if successfully

carried out would restore the Romans suffering under the yoke of Cæsar to their original liberty. Ligarius readily understands Brutus and asks Brutus whether in order to make sick men whole it would not be necessary to make sick some people who are whole. He refers to Cæsar who is in the very height of prosperity and who will have to be killed before liberty can be achieved.

*whole*, sound, healthy. *make sick*, kill.

Note the grim humour of Ligarius.

## ACT II SCENE II

**(60) Cowards die many times before their death ;  
The valiant never taste of death but once.**

[ 32-33 ]

Calpurnia is struck with terror when she observes and hears about the strange and fearful things which mark the night previous to the ides of March. She persuades Cæsar to absent himself from the Senate, for she is afraid that the comets may be indicative of some danger, perhaps of death, to him. Cæsar does not yield to her and declares that whereas cowards die several times before their actual death, the valiant endure death only once. Cowards easily and frequently imagine that death will overtake them, and then they pass through all the agonies of death. The gallant, on the other hand, never think of, much less fear, death, and thus they die only once, that is, when they actually pass away.

‘ These words,’ says Prof. Mark Hunter, ‘ are not more significant for the lofty courage they breathe, than for the philosophic spirit they illustrate, of a mind to which the miracle of miracles is ever a moral and spiritual fact than a merely physical phenomenon.’

**(61) Of all the wonders that I yet have heard,  
It seems to me most strange that men should  
fear ;**



**Seeing that death, a necessary end,  
Will come when it will come.**

[ 34-7 ]

[ For stating the context, reproduce the first three sentences of Annotation 60.]

Cæsar adds that the most wonderful thing he has heard as yet is that men fear death. It is wonderful because death is the inevitable end of life, and will happen when it is destined to happen. It is absurd to be afraid of a thing when one knows it cannot be avoided.

*Of all the wonders*, In this expression there is surely a reference to the strange and fearful happenings of the night previous to the ides of March. 'Cæsar,' says Prof. Mark Hunter 'finds the natural more miraculous than the supernatural.'

[ For further comment upon the passage, reproduce the last para of Annotation 60.]

**(62) The gods do this in shame of cowardice :  
Caesar should be a beast without a heart  
If he should stay at home to-day for fear. [ 41-3 ]**

Observing that 'nor heaven nor earth have been at peace,' Cæsar bids the priests 'do present sacrifice' and communicate to him 'their opinion of success' that is, whether or not he may stir forth that day. Soon after, news arrives that the priests are against his stirring forth, for, on plucking the entrails of an offering, they discovered no heart within the animal. Cæsar interprets the phenomenal happening in an entirely different manner. He says that the gods have done this in order to put cowardice to shame. They have shown that a man, who, from fear, should desist from doing what he thought he ought to do, was no better than a beast without a heart. If Cæsar should stay at home and absent himself from the Senate owing to fear, he should be a beast without a heart.

‘Cæsar’s tone’ says Prof. Hunter ‘is too boastful and imperious, but the thoughts and sentiments uttered are none the less noble and royal.’

- (63) **No, Caesar shall not: danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he :  
We are two lions litter’d in one day,  
And I the elder and more terrible:  
And Caesar shall go forth.** [ 44-48 ]

In obedience to Cæsar’s commands, the priests ‘do present sacrifice,’ and on finding no heart in the beast, send word that Cæsar should stay at home. But Cæsar interprets the discovery of the priests as shaming his cowardice and declares that he shall not stay at home. He adds that Danger is aware that he (Cæsar) is more dangerous than Danger itself. He and Danger are as it were two lions born on the same day, he being the elder and the more fearful of the two. So he shall go forth to the Senate.

*danger*, personified, hence ‘he’ in the following line.

[For comment reproduce the last para of Annotation 63.]

- (64) **Shall Caesar send a lie ?  
Have I in conquest stretch’d mine arm so far,  
To be afear’d to tell greybeards the truth ?  
Decius, go tell them Caesar will not come.** [ 65-68 ]

Merely to please the fear-stricken Calpurnia, Cæsar decides to absent himself from the meeting of the Senate, and to send word through Antony that he is ill. Scarcely is the decision made when Decius arrives. When Calpurnia asks him to report to the Senate that Cæsar is ill, Cæsar asks himself whether he is to send a lie? No, he will not. Has he displayed his courage in so many a battle with the consequence that he should now hesitate to utter the truth to the old Senators? He will speak out the true reason without minding how the Senators may understand him. And the true reason is merely that he will not come.

*Shall Cæsar send a lie?* Cæsar has changed his mind. Either Calpurnia's eagerness to pacify the Senate shames him, or the change of messenger has modified the message. Antony might have been commissioned to put the Senate off with some trifling excuse. With Decius, Cæsar was constrained to stand somewhat upon his dignity.

- (65) **Pardon me Caesar, for my dear dear love  
To your proceeding bids me tell you this;  
And reason to my love is liable.** [102-104]

Decius Brutus comes to fetch Cæsar forth. He explains Calpurnia's dream in such a way as to make it appear 'fair and fortunate,' and he also informs Cæsar that 'the Senate have concluded to give a crown to mighty Cæsar.' Finally he tries to win over Cæsar by asserting his extreme devotion to him. Cæsar must pardon him if he has spoken more openly than would be thought prudent. It is his 'dear dear love,' his over-mastering devotion that prompts him to tell all this to the advantage of Cæsar. And his reason is subject to his love. That is to say, if he has been more frank than reason or prudence would justify, he excuses himself on the ground that his love for Cæsar is stronger than his reason.

*dear dear*, very dear. The repetition of the adjective has the force of a very strong superlative. *To your proceeding*, Decius takes 'proceeding' in the sense of advantage and connects 'To your proceeding' with 'tell you this.' *And reason... liable*, Decius means that his reason or prudence is subordinate to his love.

The lines bear out Decius to be a typical flatterer.

#### ACT II SCENE III

- (66) **if it will please Caesar  
To be so good to Caesar as to hear me,  
I shall beseech him to befriend himself.** [28-30]

Brutus has revealed to Portia all about the conspiracy, and

she, who has a man's mind but a woman's might, is tortured with anxiety on her husband's account and comes with Lucius into the streets. She meets Artemidorus and on learning from him that he wants to see Cæsar, surmises that he has some suit to present. Artemidorus replies in the affirmative and explains that if Cæsar would choose to be so good to himself, would study his own welfare to such an extent as to listen to him (Artemidorus) he would request Cæsar to consider his interest. In other words, he wants to warn Cæsar against the conspiracy and desires that Cæsar should not be indifferent.

*to Cæsar, to himself, said playfully.*

*befriend himself, consider his interest.*

The Folios assign the speech to the Soothsayer who is made to enter a little ago. Some editors however substitute Artemidorus on the ground 'that the speech fits in exactly with what immediately precedes, whilst it is utterly out of keeping with the role of the Soothsayer. At the beginning of Act III, we have Artemidorus and the Soothsayer together. Artemidorus presents his suit according to his announcement here and at the outset of the scene. The Soothsayer, on the other hand, presents no suit but merely answers Cæsar's taunt, 'The ides of March are come,' with the significant words, 'Ay, Cæsar; but not gone.' The Soothsayer indeed is no way anxious for Cæsar's safety; he is merely concerned that his prophecy should not be falsified.'—(*Prof. Hunter*).

### ACT III SCENE I

**(67) Are we all ready? What is now amiss  
That Caesar and his Senate must redress?**

**[31-32]**

Cæsar opens the meeting of the Senate with these questions. When he asks whether all are ready, he probably means whether everything is ready for the business which is to be

transacted. This however seems strange, and hence the question has been appropriately assigned by some editors to Casca who has just been reminded that he is the first to strike. Casca may be taken to mean whether all the conspirators are ready to play their several parts according to previous design.

The second question undoubtedly belongs to Cæsar. He addresses the Senate and wants to know what wrong has been done which Cæsar and his Senate must repair. Thus his first thought is the redress of grievances and bears him out to be a true ruler of men. Yet his expression has been commented upon adversely. Mr. Verity remarks that Cæsar shows disrespect to the Senate by calling it "his" Senate and in naming himself first. Mr. Watt says that the historical Cæsar would never have used such a phrase, although he himself had to a large extent reconstituted the Senate and, as dictator, *i.e.*, temporary king, was supposed to use the Senate as an advisory council.

**(68) These couchings and these lowly courtesies  
Might fire the blood of ordinary men,  
And turn pre-ordinance and first decree  
Into the law of children. Be not fond,  
To think that Caesar bears such rebel blood  
That will be thaw'd from the true quality  
With that which melteth fools. [36-42]**

According to the design of the conspirators, Metellus Cimper kneels before Cæsar and addresses him, 'most high, most mighty, and most puissant.' His petition is to recall his brother who has been banished from Rome. Cæsar detests the obsequious behaviour of Metellus and tells him that prostrations and humble supplications might stir the feelings of average individuals and make them change what had once been resolved upon and laid down. But he (Metellus) should not be so foolish as to suppose that there 'runs in Cæsar's veins blood so ready to revolt from what is noble that it will be thawed from its firm consistency by the warmth of sweet words which has such effect upon the blood of fools.' Cæsar thus

describes himself to be an extraordinary mortal who will never go back upon his previous decision, however much one may endeavour to move him. Couchings and courtesies have not the slightest effect upon him.

*pre-ordinance and first decree*, that which had been once resolved upon and laid down.

*the law of children*, Children often change the rules of the game they choose to play. Hence the expression may be taken to mean 'fickleness or caprice.' *rebel blood*, inconstant nature. *thaw'd from the true quality*, melted from its firm consistency.

Cæsar's tone may appear at first sight 'boastful and imperious,' but the thoughts to which he gives expression are none the less 'noble and royal.'

(69) **I could be well moved, if I were as you;  
If I could pray to move, prayers would move me;  
But I am constant as the northern star,  
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality  
There is no fellow in the firmament.** [58-62]

Cæsar refuses to recall Cimber from banishment and declares that 'Cæsar doth not wrong, nor without cause will he be satisfied.' Yet Brutus and Cassius plead on behalf of Cimber, when Cæsar reiterates his firmness of mind and points out how mere prayers would have no effect whatever on him. If he could bring himself like those people to implore favours from others he might be moved by such entreaties as they were now addressing. In other words, it was never in his nature to beg others and, on this account, he would never yield to the entreaties of others. He was an extraordinary man, as constant as the northern or the pole-star whose 'immovable and fast-fixt nature is shared by none of his fellow stars.'

*if I were as you*, if I were one like yourselves, i.e., if I were

not an extraordinary man. *If I could pray to move*, Some commentators have taken this to mean 'if I were not so placed as to have no need for prayers.' This is quite unfair to Cæsar. The meaning rather is, 'if I were not above asking that interest should interfere with what is decreed.' He repeats what he has already told, that pre-ordinance and first decree should not be turned into the law of children.

(70) **How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!**  
[111-13]

The conspirators have achieved their aim, and the mighty Cæsar lies low at the foot of Pompey's statue. Cassius's joy and pride are boundless, and he breaks forth in these words of triumph. He prophesies that the lofty scene they have enacted, the noble deed they have performed, is sure to be reproduced on the theatres even after several ages and in countries and languages yet unknown to the world. In a word, he is confident that their deed that day will never die.

Shakespeare's play is itself a fulfilment of the prophecy. There is no doubt that there is also a reference to other plays which had appeared on the English stage on the subject of Julius Cæsar.

The passage is a striking illustration of Cassius' passion for liberty and patriotic zeal. In his opinion, they have performed 'a lofty scene' which the world would never let die.

(71) **I wish we may: but yet have I a mind  
That fears him much, and my misgiving still  
Falls shrewdly to the purpose.** [144-46]

Brutus sends back the servant of Mark Antony with the assurance that his master may call without any fear and obtain explanation for their revolt against Cæsar. Soon after the servant departs, Brutus turns to Cassius and tells him that

they shall find a true friend in Antony. Cassius replies that he hopes they may, but he doubts. He has an inward feeling, a presentiment, which makes him suspect as to how he may act. And his suspicions are always fulfilled with an unpleasant accuracy. His fears never prove to be groundless.

*still*, always. *shrewdly*, used in the sense of 'very,' 'highly.'

This is one of the various occasions during which the insight of Cassius is contrasted with Brutus's thorough lack of it.

(72) **Gentlemen all,—alas, what shall I say?**

**My credit now stands on such slippery ground,  
That one of two bad ways you should conceit me,  
Either a coward or a flatterer.** [ 190-93 ]

On being assured by Brutus that no harm shall befall him, Antony goes to the scene of Cæsar's assassination, expresses his sorrow over the death of the mighty Julius, and shakes hands with everyone of the conspirators. He calls them 'Gentlemen' and adds that he is at a loss to say anything further. His credit or reputation is upon such a weak footing that they will regard him in one of two ways equally bad. Either he will be looked upon as a coward who surrenders himself or as a villain who pretends to make a surrender and to be friends in order later to oppose them. In a word, it is impossible for him to hope that he will be favourably understood.

*conceit*, judge.

'There is supreme craft and supreme courage in Antony's thus pointedly suggesting the part he is actually playing.'

(73) **Here wast thou bay'd, brave hart;  
Here didst thou fall, and here thy hunters stand,  
Sign'd in thy spoil; and crimson'd in thy lethe.** [ 204-6 ]



Antony shakes hands with the conspirators, but immediately he reflects that the spirit of Cæsar would be grieved to see him shaking their bloody fingers. Filled with this remorseful thought, he turns to the murdered body and prays for pardon. At the same time he points to the spot on which the body lies and laments that there he was brought to bay by his enemies as a hart in the chase is brought to bay by hounds. There he fell, and there his assassins stand like hunters around an animal they have slain. They are marked with the blood that flowed from Cæsar's body when he was slain and dyed in that stream of blood which had brought him oblivious of all earthly things. In short, Antony compares Cæsar's assassins to hunters, standing round where the hart was bayed and slain, signed in his spoil and crimsoned in his lethe; that is, blooded after the fashion of English sportsmen.

**(74) And Caesar's spirit ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice  
Cry 'Havoc,' and let slip the dogs of war;  
[270-73]**

Left alone beside the dead body of Cæsar, Antony finds an opportunity to speak out his genuine emotions and to throw off the disguise he has been obliged to maintain during the presence of Brutus and the rest of the conspirators. He prophesies that the whole of Italy will soon be a prey to domestic fury and fierce civil strife. The spirit of Cæsar roaming throughout the length and breadth of the country like a beast of prey and accompanied by Ate, the spirit of revenge, shall, with a supreme and unquestionable voice, cry 'havoc' and set free the dogs of war, *i.e.*, sword, fire, and famine, which stand for death, destruction, and suffering respectively.

*Ate*, goddess of Discord; often represented as avenging evil deeds. *come hot from hell*, come in hot haste from the lower world which is its abode. *confines*, territories. *Havoc*, utter, indiscriminating destruction. *let slip the dogs of war*, the figurative expression is derived from coursing.

## ACT III SCENE II

- (75) **Caesar's better parts  
Shall be crown'd in Brutus.** [52-53]

The mob of Rome listens to the speech of Brutus and expresses its approbation in a variety of ways. The Third Citizen exclaims, 'Let him be Cæsar,' while the Fourth Citizen adds that 'Cæsar's better parts shall be crown'd in Brutus.' The latter means that Brutus may be chosen King of Rome, and that in him they shall have a king who has all the virtues of Cæsar without any of his drawbacks.

It is clear from this utterance that the mob is entirely in favour of monarchy and has grown quite unfit for a republic. The assassination of Cæsar has therefore been in vain. Brutus however does not see through the mob and fails to protest against the monarchical sentiment.

- (76) **Here, under leave of Brutus and the rest—  
For Brutus is an honourable man,  
So are they all, all honourable men,—  
Come I to speak in Cæsar's funeral.** [82-85]

These are among the opening lines of the immortal speech delivered by Mark Antony over the body of Cæsar to the Roman mob. By the permission granted by Brutus and the rest, by Brutus who is honourable even as all the rest are honourable, he comes to speak in Cæsar's funeral.

*an honourable man*, Antony speaks of Brutus in this manner because in his speech to the mob, Brutus had said: 'Believe me for mine honour, and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe.'

*So are they all*, These words are worthy of scrutiny. Brutus enjoyed an unquestioned reputation for honour. By classing him with the others who certainly possessed no such reputation, Antony skilfully brings down Brutus to their low level.

- (77) **And as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,  
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it,  
As rushing out of doors to be resolved  
If Brutus so unkindly knock'd or no. [ 177-80 ]**

The irrational mob which only a minute ago idolized Brutus passes through a complete change on listening to the words of Antony. Encouraged by the situation, the skilful orator proceeds to give a vivid description of the assassination. Taking up Cæsar's mantle he points out the several rents. Naturally he dwells at length on Brutus, the well-beloved Brutus, the angel of Cæsar. When after dealing the fatal stroke, Brutus drew back the cursed weapon, the blood of Cæsar had followed it in order to ascertain whether it was Brutus who so ungratefully inflicted the stroke. In a word, Cæsar had the shock of a surprise when he saw Brutus among the assassins, for he had loved him most.

*cursed steel*, 'cursed,' because of the assassination its owner perpetrated with it. *Mark how, etc.*, the evidence lies in the bloodstains on the garment. *rushing out of doors, etc.*, The figure employed here is from the knocking at a door and the person within hastily opening to see who had knocked.

Thus Antony gives a telling description of the assassination and arouses the emotion of the audience.

- (78) **For when the noble Cæsar saw him stab,  
Ingratitude, more strong than traitors' arms,  
Quite vanquish'd him : [ 184-6 ]**

[For context, reproduce the first two sentences of Annotation 77.]

He dwells at particular length on the part played by Brutus who had more than anybody else enjoyed the affection and regard of Cæsar. When Cæsar saw him among the assassins he was shocked beyond description. Ingratitude which is far stronger than the weapons employed by ungrateful wretches

completely overcame Cæsar, and he fell never to rise again. In other words, Cæsar could not bear the treachery of Brutus.

*traitors' arms*, It is noteworthy that Antony here says what he means. Instead of repeating 'honourable men' he says 'traitors.'

The exquisite skill with which Antony appeals to the emotions of the mob is noteworthy.

**(79) They that have done this deed are honourable :  
What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,  
That made them do it: [210-12]**

By his masterly appeal to the passions and emotions of the mob, Antony stirs them up 'to a sudden flood of mutiny' They shout out with one accord, 'Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay! Let not a traitor live!' Pretending to curb the spirit he has provoked, Antony begins once more to dwell upon the character of the conspirators. The authors of the deed, the perpetrators of the assassination, he says, are honourable. He is at a loss to know what personal grievances they may have had that led them do the deed. Thus Antony suggests that they were anything but honourable and had nothing but private reasons against Cæsar.

Thus does Antony 'deftly insinuate the blackest charge against the conspirators.'

**(80) but were I Brutus,  
And Brutus Antony, there were an Antony  
Would ruffle up your spirits, and put a tongue  
In every wound of Caesar, that should move  
The stones of Rome to rise and mutiny. [224-28]**

Towards the conclusion of his immortal speech, Antony pretends that he is a plain blunt man and only speaks right on; unlike Brutus who is an orator. He can but point out the wounds of Cæsar and bid them speak for his sake. If however Brutus should exchange places with him and appeal to

the mob they would find one who, speaking upon the same theme as himself (Antony), would stir their spirits to the highest pitch of excitement. He would, as it were, endow every wound of Cæsar with a tongue, with a weapon of appeal, that the very stones of Rome would as a result rise up in mutiny.

‘Nothing,’ says Prof. Hunter, ‘could of course be more ludicrously contrary to fact than this assertion. Antony is a consummate orator; Brutus is none.’

### ACT III SCENE III

**(81) It is no matter, his name’s Cinna; pluck but his name out of his heart, and turn him going. [ 33-35 ]**

Antony has worked the mob up to a frenzy. They come across Cinna the poet and overwhelm him with a series of questions without even giving him time to reply. When they hear that his name is Cinna, they think that he is the conspirator Cinna and want him to be torn to pieces. The unfortunate victim exclaims that he is Cinna the poet, but his explanation does not save him. The Fourth Citizen says that it does not matter if he is Cinna the poet. The mere fact of his bearing the name of a conspirator is enough to warrant punishment.

‘There was in Cassius’s mind no difference between Brutus and Cæsar but in name: there is no similarity between the two Cinnas but in name. That, however, is quite sufficient for the mob.’—(*Mr. Watt*).

### ACT IV SCENE I

**(82) This is a slight unmeritable man,  
Meet to be sent on errands: is it fit,  
The three-fold world divided, he should stand  
One of the three to share it? [ 12-15 ]**

At the opening of Act IV, Octavius, Antony and Lepi-

dus are represented as sentencing several to death. Suddenly Antony asks Lepidus, without even a show of courtesy, to go to Cæsar's house and fetch his will. As soon as Lepidus leaves on this errand, Antony speaks out his opinion of the man. Lepidus is an insignificant, worthless fellow, fit to be sent on errands (such as Antony has just sent him upon). It is not proper that he should obtain one of the three portions into which they are to divide the world.

It has also been suggested that 'the three-fold world divided' means 'the three-fold division of the world,' the three divisions being, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

Antony's description is not borne out by the play. In fact Lepidus does not appear again. The part assigned to him in *Antony and Cleopatra* illustrates the truth of Antony's remarks.

**(83) A barren-spirited fellow ; one that feeds  
On objects, arts, and imitations,  
Which out of use and stal'd by other men,  
Begin his fashion. [ 36-39 ]**

This is Antony's disparaging description of Lepidus. He has no originality of character and cannot devise anything of himself. He is 'satisfied with castaway and broken fragments, things which have been abandoned as worthless, and with aping the manners of others. And these when discarded and rendered stale by long use are to him as a new fashion.' He is so stupid that he is under the illusion of being most fashionable when in fact he follows what has been rejected by everybody else as out of date.

*objects*, things cast away as useless. Note the change in the metaphor employed. From one relating to eating (*objects*, *arts*) there is a change to one pertaining to dress.

[For comment see the conclusion to Annotation 82.]

## ACT IV SCENE III

- (84) **I an itching palm!**  
**You know that you are Brutus that speak this,**  
**Or, by the gods, this speech were else your last.**  
[ 12-14 ]

After bidding their respective armies retire, Brutus and Cassius meet privately to give expression to their mutual complaints. For once Brutus is seen quite out of his temper and he tells Cassius that he is 'much condemn'd to have an itching palm.' The wrath of Cassius knows no bounds at the monstrous accusation. He, an itching palm! It is Brutus that speaks the words. Else, swears Cassius, he would kill the man on the spot and close his mouth for ever. In other words, it is with the greatest effort that he is containing himself. Any other man than Brutus would under the circumstances have met with his death by then.

*an itching palm*, hand that longs to grasp bribes.

*speaks*, This is the reading in the Folios. Pope corrected it to 'speak' and the correction is generally followed.

This is one of the several passages which have contributed to the fame of the scene (IV, iii).

- (85) **Remember March, the ides of March remember :**  
**Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?**  
**What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,**  
**And not for justice?** [ 18-21 ]

In the famous quarrel-scene between Brutus and Cassius the former accuses the latter of having an itching palm. The wrath of Cassius knows no bounds at the monstrous accusation. Brutus, however, pursues his point and asks Cassius to remember the historic ides of March, to call back to his mind the assassination of Cæsar, the foremost man of all this world. Cæsar shed his blood, *i.e.*, was done to death for the sake of justice, for establishing the principle of justice. Which of

them, he asks, was so great a villain as to stab Cæsar for any cause other than the cause of justice?

*Villain*, is used proleptically; the conspirator so stabbing became a villain by the act.

‘There are few more pathetic passages,’ says Prof. MacCallum, ‘than the confession of disillusionment wrung from Brutus by the force of events. He has to realize that his associates were not the men he supposed them. Their hands are not clean, their hearts are not pure, even his brother Cassius connives at corruption and has an itching palm himself.’

(86)

By the gods

**You shall digest the venom of your spleen,  
Though it do split you; for, from this day forth,  
I'll use you for my mirth, yea, for my laughter,  
When you are waspish.** [46-50]

In the famous quarrel-scene between Brutus and Cassius the former treats the latter with unfeeling brutality and inflicts several ‘most unkindest cuts.’ Cassius is astonished and pained beyond measure. But Brutus cares a twopence for his feeling, and says that he will leave him to get rid of his anger as best he may, however disagreeable the process. From that day onwards, he will ‘look upon him as a provocative to mirth, yes, even to laughter, when he is in that irritable state of mind, as ready as a wasp to sting everyone it comes near.’

*You shall digest the venom of your spleen*, Brutus means that Cassius cannot find relief for his feelings by venting his anger on him (Brutus) as he endeavours to do at present. He will have to endure it himself whatever be the consequences. ‘Spleen’ means hasty and violent passion.

There is no doubt that Cassius is here more ‘sinned against than sinning.’



- (87) **You have done that you should be sorry for.  
There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats;  
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty  
That they pass by me as the idle wind  
Which I respect not.**

[65-69]

In the classical quarrel-scene between Brutus and Cassius, the former treats the latter with unfeeling brutality and provokes him to the uttermost. Cassius is afraid that at any moment his temper will give way and he asks Brutus not to presume too much upon his love, and tells that he may do that he shall be sorry for. He means of course that he will put Brutus to the sword. Brutus however is as unfeeling as ever and replies that he (Cassius) has already done that he should be sorry for, that he has already proved himself to be an itching palm. The threats of Cassius can have no effect on him (Brutus). He is so conscious of uprightness and integrity of motive, so strongly clad in the armour of honourable motives that the threats pass by him as the wind to which he pays no heed.

“Brutus here affords an illustration of the true ‘Roman honour.’ The Roman is the most self-sufficient, alike incorruptible by temptation and independent of the softer influences of life.”

- (88) **A flatterer's would not, though they do appear  
As huge as high Olympus.**

[90-91]

In the celebrated quarrel-scene between Brutus and Cassius, the former rives the heart of the latter by exaggerating his defects and errors. He accuses him of having an itching palm and blames him for having locked rascal counters from his friends. Cassius's sorrow is agonising and he tells Brutus that a genuine friend could never find out any faults in the person he loves. Unmoved by the piteous appeal of Cassius Brutus retorts with the words that only a flatterer would not note the faults though they might appear to others as huge as Olympus. It must be noted that Brutus does not declare

that Cassius's faults are as huge as high Olympus. He only puts a hypothetical case.

*Olympus*, a mountain in Thessaly, supposed to be the seat of the gods.

The distinction emphasized between a true friend and a mere flatterer is perfectly true to life.

(89) **O, I could weep  
My spirit from mine eyes! There is my dagger,  
And here my naked breast; within, a heart  
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold:  
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth;  
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart.**  
[98-103]

Cassius is filled with an agonising sorrow when Brutus blames him with all the fury at his command and without any just provocation. He says he is awearied of the world and wishes it were possible for him to weep his life out of his eyes. So great is his pain and sorrow. He points out to Brutus his (Cassius) dagger and his naked breast, tells him that beneath it beats a heart, richer than Plutus' mine itself, and asks him to take away his heart, to kill him. For having, as Brutus had said, denied gold he will give up his heart itself.

*Plutus' mine*, Plutus is the classical god of wealth. The Folios read 'Pluto's,' which is probably right. Pluto, the god of the Lower World, was frequently identified with Plutus because riches were underground.

The lament of Cassius is extremely touching, and at last Brutus begins to feel sorry for what he has done.

(90) **O Cassius, you are yoked with a lamb  
That carries anger as the flint bears fire,  
Who, much enforced, shows a hasty spark  
And straight is cold again.** [109-112]

Touched by the passionate and pathetic appeal of Cassius, Brutus at long last begins to feel sorry for the unfeeling brutality with which he has inflicted on him several 'most unkindest cuts.' He tells Cassius that he (Cassius) has as colleague (yoke-fellow) one who has the weakness of a lamb, and who has within his nature anger as the flint has fire. When struck hard, the flint suddenly flashes out. Even so is Brutus's behaviour when greatly provoked. But the anger is shortlived even as the spark is.

*Lamb*, "Pope reads 'man,': 'temper' and 'heart' have been suggested. 'Lamb' is certainly very suspicious."

The passage contains 'something like a mixed metaphor; Brutus does not clearly distinguish between himself and the lamb to which he compares himself.'

*straight*, at once.

- (91) **I'll know his humour when he knows his time:  
What should the wars do with these jiggings fools?  
Companion, hence!** [135-37]

With the idea of reconciling Brutus and Cassius whose wordy warfare he happens to overhear, the poet forces his way into the tent of the former general. He asks them to be friends and employs a 'vile' rhyme between 'be' and 'ye.' Cassius enjoys the cynic's rhyme, but Brutus asks the saucy fellow to get away. Cassius once again asks his colleague to put up with the man's fashion, but Brutus replies that he will know his humour or his fashion, that he will recognize and make allowance for what is called his fashion when he (the poet) recognizes the proper season for indulging in it. These rhyming fools, he adds, are quite out of place in times of war. Then he turns to the poet himself, addresses him with contempt, and asks him to go away.

*jigging*, 'jig' once meant a ballad though it is now applied only to a particular kind of dance. *Companion*, base fellow.

- (92) Of your philosophy you make no use,  
If you give place to accidental evils. [144-5]**

As soon as Brutus and Cassius are reconciled, the latter says that he has had a singular experience that day. He had never thought that he could be so angry. Brutus then confesses that he is sick of several griefs. Without knowing what those griefs are, Cassius points out that it is not worthy of Brutus to allow himself to be affected to such an extent by the griefs. He does not make use of his philosophy, the Stoic philosophy which held that the wise and good man should be indifferent to pleasure and pain and should not be greatly moved either by one or the other. He is giving place to, allowing himself to be subjected by, chance misfortunes.

Cassius does not realize that philosophy however enlightened often gives no command over the passions.

- (93) There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries,  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures. [217-223]**

Cassius and Brutus discuss the idea of marching to Philippi and meeting the enemy in their place. Cassius argues against it, but Brutus overrules him as usual and explains himself in this famous simile. There is a golden chance in the affairs of men which if taken advantage of at the right moment leads them to glory, even as a ship has a happy voyage when she avails herself of a favourable tide. If the golden chance is lost, the losers never escape from miseries just as a ship which has lost the tide never escapes the shallows. They (Brutus and Cassius), says Brutus, are at present, as it were, on a full sea and they must avail themselves of the opportunity when it comes. Otherwise they will lose their ventures, *i.e.*, the merchandise they have put on board. In a word, Brutus is of

opinion that the moment has arrived for them to strike at the enemy and that delay would only result in the loss of all the advantages they possess, and in defeat.

*ventures*, the ordinary Elizabethan term for cargoes, the value of which was risked.

It has been remarked that the simile is not exact at all points. The results of missing the tide are not such as are described.

The passage clearly proves that Brutus was a mere theorist. His insistence on the march to Philippi is a huge mistake.

(94) **O murderous slumber,  
Lay'st thou thy leaden mace upon my boy,  
That plays thee music? Gentle knave, good  
night;  
I will not do thee so much wrong to wake thee.**  
[ 266-69 ]

At the end of the third scene of Act IV, Shakespeare gives us one of the tenderest scenes to be found throughout his plays. 'Brutus is in his tent and the boy Lucius touches his instrument drowsily fingering the strings. Shortly the boy drops away into the irresistible sleep of boyhood. Addressing sleep, Brutus asks if it inflicts its leaden mace upon the boy who, so far from doing it any injury, invites it with soft music? He then bids the boy good night and says that he will not do him so much wrong or injustice as to wake him.

*murderous slumber*, The metaphor is of a sergeant or bailiff who arrests a man by touching him with his staff. 'Perhaps sleep is here styled 'murderous' from its death-counterfeiting property.' *leaden*, heavy. *knave*, boy-servant.

The behaviour of Brutus is noteworthy. 'Brutus, who at the call of duty and honour could plunge his dagger into Cæsar, cannot wake a sleeping boy. He gently disengages the instrument from the hand of Lucius.'

5) **The strings, my lord, are false.**

[290]

It is night and Brutus is in his tent. Varro and Claudius go down to sleep. Lucius at the bidding of Brutus begins to play on the instrument, but drops away into the irresistible sleep of boyhood. Brutus alone is awake when appears the ghost of Cæsar. After asking Brutus to meet it at Philippi the ghost too vanishes. Brutus who has sunk for a while at the supernatural appearance recovers his courage and calls out for Lucius, Varro and Claudius. The page, hearing in his sleep Brutus's call, dreams that his master is scolding him for playing badly and apologises by saying that the strings of the instrument are false.

‘There is,’ says Prof. Hunter, “a deeper suggestion in the words. The fatal flaw, the moral error which made a crime appear a virtue, has turned the music of Brutus's life to discord;—‘the strings are false.’”

## ACT V SCENE I

16)

**Antony,**

**The posture of your blows are yet unknown;  
But for your words, they rob the Hybla bees,  
And leave them honeyless.**

[33-35]

During the parley that takes place before the battle of Philippi, Antony makes a veiled attack on Brutus for his behaviour during the assassination of Cæsar. ‘In your bad strokes, Brutus,’ says Antony, ‘you give good words.’ Incensed at the accusation, Cassius taunts Antony by saying that the manner in which he will place his blows is unknown. That is to say, it has yet to be proved whether he will strike home. But his words are sweet as the honey of the bees of Hybla; he has robbed the honey of its sweetness.

*posture*, ‘nature’ has been suggested. The change is not violent, and gives good sense. *are*, The plural ‘are’ with the singular subject ‘posture’ is due to the attraction of blows

which immediately precedes the verb. *your words*, Cassius alludes to Antony's address to the mob. Probably he intends to be sarcastic: 'you are good for nothing but talk.'

*Hybla*, a town in Sicily famous for its honey. 'Hyblacan' is a stock epithet for bees.

- (97) **Flatterers! Now, Brutus, thank yourself:  
This tongue had not offended so to-day,  
If Cassius might have ruled.** [45-47]

During the parley that takes place before the battle of Philippi, Antony calls Brutus and Cassius 'villains,' 'flatterers,' and gives a most offensive account of their behaviour during the assassination of Cæsar. The word 'flatterers,' wounds Cassius deeply, and he tells Brutus that he has to thank himself alone, that he is solely responsible, for the insult. Antony's tongue, he adds, would never have uttered the word 'flatterers' if Brutus had been guided by him (Cassius).

Evidently Cassius alludes to his demand that Antony should be done to death along with Cæsar. [See Act II, Scene i, 155, etc.]

- (98) **A peevish school-boy, worthless of such honour,  
Join'd with a masker and a reveller.** [61-62]

During the parley that takes place before the battle of Philippi, Octavius says that he will not sheathe his sword 'till Cæsar's three and thirty wounds be well avenged, or till another Cæsar have added slaughter to the sword of traitors.' Provoked at the word 'traitors,' Brutus tells Octavius that even if he should be the noblest of his race he could not die more honourably than on Brutus's sword. Cassius then gives the above disparaging description. Octavius, he says, is a foolish stripling unworthy of the honour of dying on Brutus's sword, and he is found in company with one who delights in masques or theatrical performances and revels.

The description is particularly characteristic of Cassius. Hence Antony's exclamation, 'Old Cassius still,' *i.e.*, still the same Cassius as of old, the cross-grained, sour-tempered despoiler of mirth.

(99) **their shadows seem  
A canopy most fatal, under which  
Our army lies, ready to give up the ghost. [87-89]**

On the eve of the battle of Philippi, Cassius who has been till then a strong Epicurean and attached no importance to what are called 'omens' begins to believe in things that 'do presage.' He tells his friend Messala that two mighty eagles which have accompanied their armies from Sardis have left them on reaching Sardis and given place to ravens, crows and kites. These fly over the heads of the soldiers and look down upon them as though they are sickly prey. Their shadows, says Cassius, appear to be a canopy foreboding destruction. Under them the soldiers seem to be ready to give up the ghost, to die.

*shadows*, plural, because of several birds casting the shadow. 'The darkness forms however a single canopy.'

ACT V SCENE III

(100) **Caesar, thou art revenged,  
Even with the sword that kill'd thee. [45-46]**

The agony of Cassius knows no bounds when he believes that Titinius has been taken captive by the enemy. He feels that he has culpably sacrificed him. He determines not to survive the crime and asks his bondman Pindarus to stab him and obtain his liberty. Pindarus has to obey. The last words of Cassius are addressed to Cæsar, to the spirit of Cæsar. His death avenges the part he took in the assassination of Cæsar. It is a remarkable coincidence that the very sword employed during the assassination serves him for his death. A more complete revenge cannot be imagined.



It is noteworthy that the last words of Cassius as well as of Brutus refer to Cæsar. Though dead, the spirit is supreme. This is one of the reasons adduced to prove that Cæsar is the hero of the play, though he passes away at the opening of the Third Act itself.

(101) **O setting sun,  
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to night,  
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set,  
The sun of Rome is set!** [ 60-63 ]

Messala and Titinius bring the happy tidings that neither side has gained an advantage, for Octavius has been defeated by Brutus and made good the overthrow of Cassius by Antony. They hope that the news will gladden Cassius not a little. What is their surprise and sorrow when they find Cassius dead! Titinius then expresses his grief and at the same time extols the eminence of the departed leader. Just as the setting sun sinks into the darkness of night with a red glow, Cassius's life has come to a close and he is lying in his red blood. The sun of Rome is set, the glory of Rome has perished for ever.

The tribute paid by Titinius illustrates the great esteem in which Cassius was held by his men.

(102) **Brutus, come apace,  
And see how I regarded Caius Cassius,  
By your leave, gods:—this is a Roman's part:  
Come, Cassius's sword, and find Titinius' heart.** [ 87-90 ]

Cassius wanted Pindarus to stab him because he felt he had culpably sacrificed Titinius. And when Titinius finds Cassius dead and rightly guesses the cause, he resolves not to survive the unfortunate hero. Expressing a few words of sincere lament, and decorating the brow of the dead body with a garland he takes the sword of the dead man himself and puts an end to his life. His last words are that Brutus should come to

the spot quickly and realize how he honoured and loved Cassius. To kill oneself from grief for a friend is a fitting part for a Roman to play. Let Cassius's sword find his heart, *i.e.*, put an end to his life (Titinius' life.)

The self-sacrifice on the part of Titinius is by far the most touching illustration of the honour and love in which Cassius was held by his men.

**(103) O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!**

**Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.** [94-96]

On hearing from Messala that Cassius has killed himself, Brutus grieves immensely and hastens to look at the body of his esteemed kinsman. A double distress awaits him, for Titinius has in the meanwhile put an end to his life to show how <sup>he</sup> regarded Cassius. At the sorry spectacle, Brutus exclaims that Julius Cæsar is mighty yet, even after his death. His spirit travels about and turns the swords of the enemy into their own entrails, *i.e.*, makes them commit suicide.

*in, into.* *proper*, used in the sense of one's own, and therefore added for emphasis.

‘Brutus recognizes that the spirit which he would fain overcome without touching the body that contained it (II, i, 169) is unconquerable even in death. Thus is Antony's prophecy fulfilled.’

**(104) Are yet two Romans living such as these?**

**The last of all the Romans, fare thee well!**

**It is impossible that ever Rome**

**Should breed thy fellow.** [98-101]

This is the touching and magnificent tribute paid by Brutus to Cassius and Titinius when he finds them dead under particularly distressing circumstances. There are none among the living Romans who are fit to compare with the brave pair.

It is not to be hoped that in the future either Rome would produce anybody to equal them. They are the last of all the Romans, and Brutus bids them a melancholy farewell.

‘The last of all the Romans, fare thee well.’ Note the peculiar use of the vocative.

Brutus’s tribute has justly become classical.

#### ACT V SCENE V

(105) **Caesar, now be still :  
I kill’d not thee with half so good a will. [50-51]**

These are the last words of Brutus. Cassius had said at the time of his death, ‘Cæsar, thou art revenged, even with the sword that kill’d thee.’ Over the dead bodies of Cassius and Titinius, Brutus had pronounced: ‘O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet, thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords in our own proper entrails.’ Now, when he is about to run on his sword, he bids Cæsar be still. Let not the spirit of Cæsar be troubled any longer, now that he who helped to kill him perishes by his own act.

It is noteworthy that the spirit of Cæsar is assigned so important a part in the play. The point contributes to maintain that Cæsar is certainly the hero, though he passes away at the opening of the Third Act. His spirit survives his body and spreads havoc.

(106) **He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.  
His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mix’d in him that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world ‘This was a man!’**  
[ 71-75 ]

This is a part of the classical tribute paid by Antony to Brutus when he finds him dead. Brutus was unique among

the conspirators. He acted from disinterested motives and for what he considered to be the general good. Prompted by these and these only, he joined himself, constituted himself, one of the conspirators. His life was gentle and his temperament so happily composed of the elements that Nature might proclaim to all the world, 'This was a man !'

The construction of the first two lines is loose, but the meaning is quite clear.

*elements*, According to the old belief everything consisted of a compound of the four 'elements,' earth, air, fire and water. These elements corresponded to the four humours, melancholy, blood, choler, phlegm, a mixture of which was supposed to make up a man's temperament.

## SECTION II

### SUBSTANCE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF SCENES

#### I. ACT I—SCENE I

SHAKESPEARE'S 'usual method is to begin with a short scene or part of a scene either full of life and stir or in some other way arresting. The opening of *Julius Cæsar* is a good instance of this method, for in the first scene we have a crowd in motion under the influence of eloquent speakers.' Apart from this it also strikes a few of the prominent notes of the play.

A vast crowd throngs the streets of Rome, waiting to see Cæsar pass in triumph on his return from Spain. The workmen have deserted their workshops. The streets are decorated. The Roman world is on the tiptoe of expectation. But the tribunes Flavius and Marullus put an end to the rejoicings of the common people and their quaint low humour by an animated burst of indignation at their making holiday over one that comes in triumph over Pompey's blood. The people disperse at the rebuke of the tribunes. Having achieved their purpose, the tribunes part after describing with apparent envy the supremacy of Cæsar :—

These growing feathers pluck'd from Cæsar's wing  
Will make him fly an ordinary pitch,  
Who else would soar above the view of men  
And keep us all in servile fearfulness.

The scene shows that there is a spirit of hatred abroad against Cæsar. This is largely owing to Cæsar's triumph over his fellow-citizens. But those who hate Cæsar grievously err in supposing that they can put an end to his supremacy by abolishing the external symbols of it, by disrobing Cæsar's images which are decked with ceremonies. Again the scene

illustrates the peculiar character of the common people. The fickleness of the Roman mob is the fact of Roman life which the dramatist wants to put in the foreground, and he achieves the purpose splendidly.

Many a time and oft  
Have you climbed up to walls and battlements.....  
Your infants in your arms, and there have sat  
To see great Pompey pass the streets of Rome:  
  
And do you now put on your best attire?  
And do you now strew flowers in his way,  
That comes in triumph over Pompey's blood?'

They are irrational and singularly swayed by passion, and hence it is that they vanish tongue-tied in their guilt when the tribunes charge them with monstrous inconstancy and ingratitude.

Thus the opening scene of *Julius Cæsar* is important from several points of view. It illustrates the dramatist's usual method in construction, indicates the unpopularity of Cæsar, and, above all, brings to light the fickleness of the Roman mob which is one of the most important factors of the play.

## II. ACT I—SCENE II

Usually Shakespeare opens his plays with 'a short scene or part of a scene either full of life and stir or in some other way arresting. Then, having secured a hearing, he proceeds to conversations at a lower pitch accompanied by little action but conveying much information. The opening of *Julius Cæsar* is a good instance of this method, for in the first scene we have a crowd in motion under the influence of eloquent speakers, and then a long scene in which almost all the information required for the understanding of the play is put before the spectators.'

Cæsar appears in a public place at Rome on his way to the

games at the celebration of the Lupercalia. His arrogance is at once evident. He has the manner of one who inspires obedience. At his voice the music ceases. A soothsayer bids him beware the ides of March, but Cæsar does not mind the warning and proceeds in his triumphal march. Cassius and Brutus are left alone on the stage, and now Cassius proceeds to try to win over Brutus to the conspiracy which has been set on foot for the destruction of Julius Cæsar. He appeals to his love of honour:—

honour is the subject of my story.  
I cannot tell what you and other men  
Think of this life; but, for my single self  
I had as lief not be as live to be  
In awe of such a thing as I myself.

He also appeals to his patriotism, to his supreme devotion to Rome:—

Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods!  
When went there by an age, since the great flood  
But it was fam'd with more than with one man?

Now is it Rome indeed and room enough,  
When there is in it but one only man.

Finally he appeals to his hatred of imperial power by alluding to a glorious ancestor of his who would have brook'd the eternal devil to keep his state in Rome as easily as a King. At the same time he lays bare his envy of Cæsar by underrating him to an almost ridiculous extent and emphasizing some of his trifling failings. Cæsar, on his return from the celebration of the games, enters a second time with an angry look, and seeing Cassius, expresses his distrust of him and gives a remarkably shrewd estimate of his character. A voracious reader, a penetrating observer, a foe to all sorts of amusement, one who never smiles—such is the account Cæsar gives of Cassius. When Cæsar has again left the stage, Casca tells Brutus and Cassius how at the games Cæsar has been thrice offered a

crown, and has reluctantly refused it. He gives a most disparaging account of the people who were present during the celebration. Brutus then departs with an understanding that he and Cassius should meet again on the morrow evidently to discuss about the political situation of Rome. Cassius congratulates himself on the response that his appeal has evoked in Brutus. In order to persuade him still further he proposes to forge letters urging Brutus to free Rome, and to throw them into his house.

It is impossible to overrate the importance of this scene. It contains 'almost the whole of what is technically called the exposition of the play. To understand the action that is to follow, the audience must realize first of all the character and position of Cæsar and his danger.' The absolutism of Cæsar and his superstition are accordingly brought out at the very beginning. The warning uttered by the soothsayer forestalls the danger. During the second appearance of Cæsar his absolutism is emphasized again in the 'chidden' appearance of his train. His physical weakness is brought to light, and also his consciousness of a danger this time in the character of Cassius.

Another matter that must be fully grasped is 'the character of the chief conspirators in relation to each other, which is to determine the course of the conspiracy.' This is furnished by the dialogue between Brutus and Cassius which is a supremely interesting piece of character study. 'Brutus's first words reveal his self-conscious puritanism; while his desire to be alone betrays his troubled conscience, and his coldness gives Cassius the opportunity to ask for an explanation, which is given.' The speeches of Cassius reveal his extreme love of liberty, his devotion to Rome, and also a disagreeable aspect of his character—his envy of Cæsar. His description of one of the conquerors and rulers of the ancient world almost baffles one's understanding.

Thirdly, the scene brings out the attitude of the Roman populace to Cæsar and monarchy. Their behaviour proves



beyond doubt that the age of liberty is gone and that Cæsarism or absolute monarchy is an irresistible time current. The manner in which Casca describes the populace is particularly interesting as an illustration of his character. Though in truth excitable and impressionable, it is his humour to pretend to be the opposite. He is "a professed cynic, a man whose affectation it is to disparage everything, and who is determined to see 'foolery' everywhere."

Finally, Cassius's soliloquy at the close of the scene, and especially the reference in the pronoun 'he' of the second line, must be fully and accurately understood, for they almost make or mar the portrait of Cassius. Some editors have taken the reference to be to Brutus in which case Cassius would become the evil genius of his noble kinsman. Others like Dr. Johnson hold that Cassius refers to Cæsar in which case the character of the conspirator becomes even ennobled. Johnson's interpretation is supported by Plutarch's *Lives*, and is in complete agreement with Shakespeare's delineation of Cassius in the play, especially in the latter half.

### III. ACT I—SCENE III

The third scene opens with Casca and Cicero in conversation during a terrible storm. The Casca of this scene is quite different from the Casca of the previous scene, and the important change is indicated by the change from prose to blank verse. He is in a breathless state and stares in a manner which astonishes the orator. He gives a most vivid account of the terrible night. There is unexampled thunder and lightning. The 'sway of earth shakes like a thing infirm.' The tempest, the like of which has never before been witnessed, drops fire. A lion has been found wandering in the streets without however injuring anybody. An owl has been seen at noonday above the market-place. A slave's hand burst into flame, but when he cast the flames from him the hand was found to be unhurt. The graves were shaken. Men swore to hearing noises of battle, the neighing of horses, the groans of dying men, the squealing of ghosts among the

voices of the storm. On the whole Casca is completely perturbed and he believes 'they are portentous things unto the climate that they point upon.'

After discussing the various signs and omens Cicero leaves the stage and Cassius enters. Cassius persuades Casca that the prodigies point to Cæsar's tyranny, and so with little trouble induces him to join the conspiracy. Cinna then joins Cassius and Casca; and the three determine the necessity of winning the noble Brutus to their party.

'The powerful effect of this scene is due to the fact that Shakespeare shows us the conspiracy gathering force against the background of the storm. The apparent sympathy between Nature and the affairs of man is frequently used by poets and other artists. Technically the device is called the 'pathetic fallacy.'

Casca is chosen to relate the portents because he is impressionable, and is immediately affected by what surrounds him. In this respect he is contrasted with Cicero, whose feelings and imaginations are cold through age, and with Cassius, an Epicurean sceptic who holds himself superior to Nature. It is Cassius's calmness which enables him to dominate Casca and secure him for the conspiracy. His quick observation, as in the dark he makes out Casca by his voice and Cinna by his gait, and the rapid way in which he gives his orders and gets his information show his power as a leader; yet it is just the moment that Shakespeare uses to lay stress on the fact that Brutus was felt by all to be necessary to the success of the scheme.' (*A. F. Watt.*)

#### IV. BRUTUS'S SOLILOQUY AT THE OPENING OF ACT II

At the opening of the Second Act of the play, Brutus utters a soliloquy which is particularly important as revealing his attitude towards Cæsar. He has come to the conclusion that the only means of saving Rome from his tyranny is to kill him. He has no anger against him, except for the good of the

whole state. Cæsar would like to be crowned king; and there is no telling how much an increase of power might change his character. Just as a fine warm day brings forth the serpent from its hole, so Cæsar being given absolute power might be encouraged to be a tyrant, and then they should have to be very careful how they moved. If they did give him kingly power, they placed in his hands a weapon with which he might do great evil, with no means in their power to check. High rank is abused, when its power is exercised without mercy. And to speak candidly, Brutus has never known Cæsar allow sentiment to influence his actions. But it is proved every day that a modest bearing is, as it were, a ladder by which a young man of ambition mounts. But once at the top of the ladder the man leaves it and walks on the level he has reached. So the ambitious man who has attained his goal, needs no longer the means he took to reach it. Cæsar might behave likewise after the coronation; and prevention is better than cure. Since his present behaviour gives no ground for any such fear with regard to him, the reason for the conspiracy has to be fashioned as follows. His present power, if increased, will be excessive, and the natural result of excessive power, abuse of it, will follow. He should be looked upon as a serpent's egg, which would inevitably develop into a source of danger, and be put to death 'in the shell.'

The character of Brutus is very clearly brought out by this famous soliloquy. He fully explains his motives in joining the conspiracy, and the explanation gains him the approbation of the spectators. His freedom from personal motives and his devotion to what he honestly believes to be demanded by the state render him a noble character. He also pays a fine tribute to Cæsar as an administrator of justice. In these respects he is a total contrast to Cassius who disparages Cæsar to an almost ridiculous extent.

The soliloquy serves also to illustrate some of the leading defects in the character of Brutus. Books and books only have been his companions. Of human nature in its reality he knows almost nothing. He is a mere theorist, and is absolutely

unfit for the sphere of practical politics which he proposes to enter, only to ruin his peace and his life. The reason he alleges for murdering Cæsar cannot hold water even for a minute. It is the height of absurdity to kill a good ruler because of the fear that there is a chance of his becoming a tyrant. It must, however, be said to the credit of the absurd reasoner that he sincerely believes what he says and that he does not indulge in a piece of sophistry.

#### V. ACT II—SCENE I

This scene, one of the most important in the play, opens with a soliloquy which throws abundant light on the character of Brutus and explains his motives in leading the conspiracy against Cæsar. He decides that Cæsar's death alone can rid Rome of his tyranny. It is not from personal motives that he comes to this decision: it is his love of Rome that persuades him of the necessity of that act. Though Cæsar has throughout the past exercised his power with absolute justice there is no knowing what he would become after his coronation which would mark the summit of his ambition. Rather than allow him to develop into a serpent, he would destroy him in the shell, according to the principle that prevention is better than cure.

While he is thus meditating on the probability of Cæsar's abuse of power, if power be granted him, Cassius and the other five conspirators, Casca, Decius, Cinna, Metellus Cimbber, and Trebonius, visit him, and he consents to be one of their party, but he refuses to bind himself by oath to the execution of the project, and therein he overrules Cassius. 'The honest manliness of Brutus is sufficient to find out the unfitness of Cicero to be included in their enterprise, from his affected egotism and literary vanity.' He once more overrules Cassius, and with his usual incompetence to judge either the men or the circumstances with which he has to deal, Brutus refuses to consent to the assassination of Antony at the same time as that of Cæsar. He promises to win over Caius Ligarius, if Metellus will but bring him hither. The conspirators then

leave, and Brutus is alone. His wife who has missed him from bed, comes and questions him as to the cause of his being about at such an hour, and begs him to make her acquainted with his grief. She says she will not divulge the secret that weighs down his spirit, and he at last promises to explain the cause of his melancholy.

The primary importance of the scene lies in the fact that it develops the character of Brutus. He wins the admiration of the reader when he admits that he has no personal grievance against Cæsar and pays a high tribute to his exercise of power. His horror for unnecessary bloodshed is brought out in his refusal to sanction the assassination of Antony. He consents to Cæsar's death only because he believes it to be inevitable in the interest of Rome. Finally his devotion to his worthy wife is a particularly agreeable quality of his nature. But the defects in Brutus stand out as prominently as his merits. The reason which he alleges for assassinating Cæsar is the height of absurdity. He is a mere theorist and absolutely unfit for practical politics. In his conversation with the conspirators he fully reveals his utter want of insight into the character of men. He refuses to see any capacity in Antony. He is under the illusion that the other conspirators are disinterested patriots like himself. He has no idea of his limitations and hence it is that he refuses to follow the better judgment of Cassius. In a word, he is unfit to lead the conspiracy, and under his lead the movement is destined to fail.

No less noteworthy is the character of his excellent wife Portia. Her concern for her husband's peace of mind, her ideal conception of a wife's place and function, and her attempt to live up to her husband, readily win for her the loving admiration of the reader.

## VI. ACT III—SCENE I

In this scene "Cæsar enters for the fourth and last time. As he goes to the Senate-House, he is again warned by the soothsayer and Artemidorus, but he pays no heed and takes

his place in the Senate. The day's business commences, and according to preconcerted plans, Metellus Cimper prefers his suit praying for his brother's recall. Cæsar indignantly refuses to alter his unalterable decree. Brutus and Cassius intercede, but Cæsar answers in an arrogant tone. Casca and the other conspirators then murder Cæsar, and he falls at the base of his rival, Pompey's statue. The conspirators proclaim themselves the saviours of Rome, and the city is in a state of confusion. Antony enters and mourns over Cæsar's body and asks that he too may fall by Cæsar's side and by the daggers that killed Cæsar. Brutus tells him that the conspirators are kindly disposed to him and grants him, though against Cassius's will, permission to speak at Cæsar's funeral. Antony cleverly masks his feelings towards the conspirators, who depart. He is left alone and after apologizing to Cæsar's corpse for being 'meek and gentle with these butchers', he prophesies that Cæsar's spirit shall range for revenge, 'cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war.' He then sends a message to Octavius to keep away from Rome for a time."

This powerful scene contains the climax of the play. Cæsar is done to death, and over his body the conspirators proclaim the liberty that, by their hands, has been restored to Rome. The scene marks also the catastrophe—the turning-round of the whole action—when the servant appears with Antony's message of pretended friendship. From this moment, Antony becomes the master of the situation. 'And with the swing-round of the action there is a corresponding reversal in the spectators' sympathy. The greatness of the slain Cæsar, his nobility of soul, is now the dominant note that is struck.'

Finally, the scene throws considerable light on the character of the principal actors. Cæsar's behaviour has been variously interpreted. Some critics see nothing but self-glorification in his speeches about his extraordinary firmness and strength, and regard them as the dramatic counterpoise to the murder. 'It is not mere vanity, but a sense of the divinity which belongs to a king that makes him speak as if his decrees were unalterable laws of Nature, and as if he himself

as constant as the northern star was part of the fixed and unchangeable order of the world.' Some other commentators while admitting the touch of arrogance in the final speeches of Cæsar, see in his behaviour, on the whole, a great deal to praise. In his refusal to read the schedule presented by Artemidorus, in the words he utters on the occasion, 'What touches us ourself shall be last served,' Cæsar reveals an excellent trait of character. 'Like a true ruler of men he subordinates personal to public considerations.' Again he opens the meeting with the question—

Are we all ready? What is now amiss  
That Cæsar and his senate must redress?

Thus his first thought is *the redress of grievances*. 'His rejection of Metellus' suit, however arrogantly expressed, is based upon the soundest principles of public responsibility.' Indeed when the murderers strike Cæsar, they strike him not for his pride but for his firmness, for 'the tyrant' disdaining to act tyrannically. Finally when he is murdered he makes no futile or undignified struggle. He wraps his face in the mantle and accepts the end.

The character of Brutus is no less completely revealed in the important scene. His self-possession is admirable and stands out in marked contrast with the violent agitation of Cassius. Cassius fears that the plot has been discovered, but Brutus understands the situation aright and is quite constant. After the death of Cæsar, Brutus alone does not reveal any sign of nervousness, much less of conscious guilt.' His 'conviction that he could do no wrong and that he could convince others of his righteousness sustains him so well that he is even able to philosophise upon life and death. His behaviour towards Antony is worthy of particular note. He believes in his protestations of friendship, regards him as incapable of any serious purpose or performance and readily complies with his request to produce the body of Cæsar before the mob and make a funeral oration. This clearly reveals that Brutus possesses in too large a measure the weak-

ness of his virtue of magnanimity. Noble and loyal himself, it is impossible for him to suspect treachery in others. He lacks insight into others. Cassius points out the error, but Brutus refuses to be corrected. In fact, he does not think he is ever wrong.

As already pointed out, Cassius reveals at the beginning of the scene a violent agitation of mind. This illustrates his lack of inward strength, a deficiency which finally proves fatal to him. Naturally the murder of Cæsar unnerves him as it does all the conspirators except Brutus. Yet, in the latter part of the scene, he gives excellent proofs of his signal merits, especially of his unerring insight into the character of men. Brutus tells him that it is essential for them to be on good terms with Antony. Cassius at once remarks:—

I wish we may: but yet have I a mind  
That fears him much, and my misgiving still  
Falls shrewdly to the purpose.

Again Brutus readily agrees to allow Antony to produce Cæsar's body before the mob and make a funeral oration. Cassius fully foresees the harm that is bound to result from it and strongly protests. He refuses to admit Brutus's explanation and declares:—

I know not what may fall; I like it not.

The later developments in the story prove that Cassius is completely in the right.

Finally it is in this scene that Antony reveals himself for the first time and foreshadows his future. He thoroughly disproves Brutus's contemptuous estimate of his character and capacities, and bears out Cassius's description of him as 'a shrewd contriver.' Prompted by his enthusiastic devotion to Cæsar, he determines to avenge the foul murder by means of a stratagem. He poses to be friends with the conspirators and easily imposes upon Brutus. He obtains permission to ad-



dress the mob with the evident object of rousing them to mutiny and rage against the murderers of 'the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times.' Thus he is without doubt a shrewd contriver. One cannot however fail to be struck by his sincere and lofty tributes to Cæsar.

Thus the scene illustrates some of the leading aspects of the principal characters who take part in it.

### VII. BRUTUS'S FUNERAL SPEECH

Brutus addresses the people and attempts to justify the assassination of Cæsar. He asks first for a silent hearing, respect for his honour, and wise judgment. While claiming that no man has greater love for Cæsar, he admits that his love for Rome is greater, and that the only question to consider in his act is which of the two alternatives is preferable, slavery with Cæsar alive, or freedom through his death. He has taken the impartial cause as always. Just as he is moved to tears by Cæsar's love, to joy by his good fortune, to feelings of honour for his valour, so impartially he metes out death for his ambition: and none can take offence unless he be base enough to desire bondage, or uncivilized enough to cease to be a Roman, or vile enough to be unpatriotic. He departs with the declaration that as he slew his best lover for the good of Rome, he has the same dagger for himself when it shall please his country to need his death.

Brutus's funeral speech throws great light on his character. Nowhere else does he give so complete an illustration of his most serious defect, his thorough ignorance of human nature. 'To the fickle, irrational, passion-swayed mob he thinks it sufficient to urge reason. He will put before them such arguments as he would have put before a knot of philosophers like himself. No appeal is to be made to imagination, no recourse had to eloquence, to gesture or pathos of tone.' The masterly speech of Antony and its immediate and important effects find in fact the completest contrast in the cold reason of the stoic philosopher and the poor response it evokes.

## VIII. ANTONY'S FUNERAL SPEECH (U.Q.\*)

It is by his famous funeral oration that Antony turns the Roman citizens against the conspirators and fully achieves his secret purpose. The circumstances under which he begins are difficult and even perilous. Brutus has just finished and convinced the mob that 'he slew his best lover for the good of Rome, and has ready the same dagger for himself, when it shall please his country to need his death.' The inconstant and irrational citizens are thoroughly satisfied and express their readiness to bestow the highest honours and powers on their present idol. And when Antony appears, he is warned by the people 'to speak no harm of Brutus' nor to praise Cæsar, for 'Cæsar was a tyrant.'

Under circumstances so adverse none but a speaker of superlative tact can hope to obtain even a hearing. It is wonderful that Antony, the man ignorantly underrated by Brutus as but a limb of Cæsar, acquits himself beyond all expectations. His initial task is to 'insinuate himself into the good graces of his audience.' This he does by telling them that his object is to bury Cæsar, not to praise him. Immediately he introduces the main topic of his oration—

The noble Brutus  
Hath told you Cæsar was ambitious;  
If it were so, it was a grievous fault.

Soon after, he strengthens the favour he has obtained by declaring, with the utmost modesty, that Brutus has been good enough to grant him leave to address the people.

Thus he succeeds in ingratiating himself into the favour of his audience and proceeds to speak on the charge of ambition brought by Brutus against Cæsar. It is remarkable that he does not 'bluntly deny the charge,' for he would thereby attack directly Brutus's action in the murder; and Brutus is the idol of the mob. It is no less noteworthy that he does not,

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\* Un versity Question.

like Brutus appeal to reason. Aware of the ignorance and illiteracy of the people before him, he realizes that abstract reasoning will be utterly useless. He therefore prefers to allude to several plain facts and to make his hearers understand the drift of them all. Cæsar has brought to Rome countless captives and enriched the public treasury with their huge ransoms. Cæsar's sympathy for the poor is a well-known fact. Again on the Feast of the Lupercal, celebrated only a short time ago, he declined the monarchical crown though he was pressed to accept it several times. That, comments Antony, did not look like ambition. Finally, he touchingly appeals to the people to lament the death of one who cared so little for his fame and so much for that of his country, and whose concern for the poor was undoubted. Then he cleverly pauses for a few minutes, ostensibly to overcome his overmastering grief but really to make his hearers feel the full effect of the words he has spoken. Indeed he has produced a remarkable effect already. One of the citizens remarks that 'there is much reason in his sayings.' Even the fourth citizen who warned Antony against speaking ill of Brutus is convinced that the accusation of ambition is not true.

Antony can now afford to speak of the conspirators in a less guarded manner than hitherto. He aims at stirring the mob to mutiny and rage against Cæsar's assassins, and he proceeds to achieve his purpose with rare tact. He ironically tells the people that he will not 'rouse their indignation lest he should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong, who are honourable men.' He addresses the people, 'Masters' and thus flatters their pride. He also mentions quite abruptly the will left by Cæsar and skilfully refers to the provision in it for the commons. This operates like magic and regenerates the affection and regard the people once cherished for the great man. As a natural consequence they grow furious against those who have assassinated the object of their love and respect. To enhance the effect, Antony declares that he does not propose to read the will, for he states with excellent skill that they should not know that they are Cæsar's heirs. This device produces an immediate effect, and the people clamour that

the will should be read. Antony then pretends to be sorry for having divulged to them the will, for he is afraid he will be doing an injustice to the honourable men whose daggers have stabbed Cæsar, if he should read out the will. No words can describe the satisfaction that Antony must have felt when the mob exclaims on this occasion :—

They were traitors : honourable men !  
They were villains, murderers.

Before reading out the will, Antony gives yet another instance of his supreme tact. ‘The mantle scene is almost unique for pathos and dramatic effect.’ The orator raises the mantle, and the hearts of the audience at once melt with pity. With the mantle in his hand, Antony refers to the glorious career of Cæsar and laments that one who was so glorious is at present unhonoured and unsung. He refers also to the ingratitude and hypocrisy of the conspirators and paints the conduct of Brutus especially with heart-rending pathos. He finishes by taking away the mantle completely and exhibiting the mangled body of the conqueror, the patriot, and the people’s friend.

The savage cry that proceeds at once from the audience illustrates the effect of the display.

Revenge ! About ! Seek ! Burn ! Fire ! Kill !  
Slay ! Let not a traitor live !

The fury of the people is such that they want to go away instantly and begin the work of revenge. They even forget that they have yet to hear the will read out. Antony reminds them and reads out that to every Roman, Cæsar has given seventy-five drachmas, and that moreover he has left all his walks this side the Tiber, to them and to their heirs for ever. And he concludes with the exclamation :—

Here was a Cæsar ! when comes such another ?

‘Never, never’ they cry out and at once carry away the body of Cæsar with the declaration:—

We’ll burn his body in the holy place,  
And with the brands fire the traitors’ houses.

Antony has achieved a signal victory and feels the highest satisfaction:—

Now let it work. Mischief, thou art afoot,  
Take thou what course thou wilt!

Antony’s speech is thus ‘a perfect masterpiece, exhibiting the beauty, grandeur, power and sublimity of oratory when wielded by an orator fully aware of the rules of rhetoric, of the character and dispositions of men, and competent to use this mighty power for the attainment of his wishes.’

#### IX. ACT IV—SCENE III

The third scene of the Fourth Act, usually known as the Quarrel Scene between Brutus and Cassius, has always been famous. Cassius accuses Brutus of wronging him by ‘noting Lucius Pella for taking bribes of the Sardians.’ Brutus retorts by charging Cassius with similar corruption—

Let me tell you, Cassius, you yourself  
Are much condemn’d to have an itching palm,  
To sell and mart your offices for gold  
To undeservers.

Without minding the surprise and indignation of the offended Cassius, Brutus provokes him still further by pointing out that he has escaped punishment only because of his exalted position. He declares that it is the height of disgrace that those who had struck the foremost man of all this world but for supporting robbers should contaminate their fingers with base bribes. For his own part he would rather be a dog and bay the moon than such a Roman. Cassius loses his tem-

per and replies that if he were provoked further he would forget himself and gratify his passion. But Brutus treats his threat with disdain and calls him 'slight man.' Cassius laments his lot most touchingly and asks the gods whether he is to 'endure all this.' Brutus replies that he should endure a great deal more and fret till his proud heart breaks. From that day forth, he adds, he would use him for his mirth. After a while he also urges against Cassius his refusal of certain sums of money wherewith to pay the troops. Cassius says that the charge is false, and that evidently he has been misrepresented. Brutus however shows no signs of relenting, and the agony of the ill-used Cassius is such that he calls on Antony and Octavius to make an end of his life, for he is disgusted with the world. He asks Brutus himself to rid him of the agony of existence.

At last Brutus relents and admits that he has been ill-tempered. This confession is a most agreeable surprise to Cassius, and the noble kinsmen are at once reconciled.

A little later Brutus divulges to Cassius the shocking news that Portia is dead, and Cassius exclaims:—'How 'scaped I killing when I cröss'd you so?' Titinius and Messala then enter, and Brutus and Cassius discuss their plan of operations against Antony and Octavius. Cassius proposes that they shall stay where they are, but Brutus overrules him, and he insists on going to Philippi with all speed. Cassius departs, and Brutus is left alone with Lucius, who falls asleep while playing his instrument. Brutus gently disengages the instrument from the hand of Lucius and continues to read his book where he had left it off the previous night. The ghost of Cæsar appears to him and warns him that it will appear again at Philippi.

'The scene thus covers a wide range of feeling. In the quarrel the sympathies of most readers will be with Cassius. His quick bursts of anger, his almost childish threats of violence, and his real affection for Brutus, are far more human than the cold irony which Brutus employs. Brutus's anger, to

use his own metaphor, is ill-digested. The second topic of the scene, the death of Portia, presents Brutus battling with himself to conquer his despair at the worst that could befall him. The next topic of the scene, the reconciliation between Brutus and Cassius, is more fatal to their cause than is their quarrel, for it leaves the practical control of affairs in the hands of Brutus, who will not allow his colleague so much as a hearing. Finally the scene with Lucius and the music prepare the way for the supernatural event which follows. The ghost of Cæsar reminds Brutus that Cæsar's spirit is still alive and cannot be annihilated by the sword.'

#### X. THE PLOT-CONSTRUCTION OF 'JULIUS CÆSAR'

One of the outstanding features of Shakespeare's 'Julius Cæsar' is the simplicity of its construction. There is no underplot and no incident of any importance that can be criticized as irrelevant. The theme of the play is the conspiracy against Julius Cæsar, the shortlived fulfilment of the conspiracy in the assassination of the mighty Dictator, and its final failure owing to the survival of the invulnerable spirit of Cæsarism or monarchy. As a result of this survival the conspirators are overthrown and the liberties of Rome are gone for ever.

To dramatize this story it is necessary to indicate at the outset the political state of Rome. 'Cæsar stood at the head of the state as despot, and the Roman populace which had lost all taste and gift for freedom was indifferent to forms of government, being prepared to support any ruler who would find it bread and amusement.' There was however at the same time a keen feeling against the Dictator among the upper class. This hostility was prompted partly by personal envy of the supreme person and partly by that attachment to constitutional freedom which continued to prevail among the nobler Romans.

All this is represented in the opening Act. The worthless character of the mob is well illustrated in the first scene and

emphasized in Casca's description of their behaviour during the Lupercalia. They are ready to rejoice in Cæsar's triumph without realizing that he comes in triumph over Pompey's blood. When accused of ingratitude they vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness. During the Lupercalia, 'Cæsar poses to them, and they treat him as they do the actors in the theatre.' Secondly the despotic position of Cæsar is brought out. He has all the manner and surroundings of a king. The opening portion of the second scene is particularly illustrative of this factor. The rebukes addressed by Flavius and Marullus to the populace, and still more the dialogue between Cassius and Brutus reveal the other important aspect of the political situation, *viz.*, the spirit of hatred against Cæsar. Brutus is prompted by love of constitutional freedom while Cassius is actuated by personal jealousy also. The other conspirators are impelled by nothing but personal hatred.

The action of the play commences in the formation of the conspiracy. 'Cassius appears in the storm collecting the conspirators together and attaching them to the cause; and finally Brutus is secured and takes the lead. From the dawn of the ides of March to the hour of murder, the action develops under circumstances of the extremest tension. Cæsar almost stays at home. Artemidorus puts into his hand a list of the conspirators. Portia, mad with anxiety, nearly betrays her husband's secret. The soothsayer gives his last warning. Popilius Lena seems to betray the plot to Cæsar; then the crisis comes as the conspirators close round, and Cæsar falls at the base of Pompey's statue,' never to rise again.

This is the climax of the play. Over the dead body of Cæsar the conspirators proclaim the liberty that, by their hands, has been restored to Rome. But their success is only momentary, and the reaction of the play begins when Brutus commits the fatal folly of permitting Antony to address the mob. Even before the end of the scene news arrives that Brutus and Cassius are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome. The reaction develops in the Fourth Act. Antony and Octavius are removing their enemies, and concerting



their plans in a manner as cold-blooded as that of Fate itself. At Sardis Brutus and Cassius are, owing to the impracticable nature of the one and the temper of the other, led into a quarrel which ends in the direction of affairs being left to an incapable head. Both are vexed by presentiments of future ruin and by personal losses. The catastrophe is Philippi, a picture of hopeless blundering and premature despair, relieved only by the noble deaths of those who imagined themselves the restorers of their country's liberty.

Thus the construction of the play is wonderfully regular and even. In the whole range of Shakespeare's works, it stands unique for the 'symmetrical evolution of the story.'

### SECTION III

#### ESSAYS ON CHARACTERS, ANSWERS TO UNIVERSITY QUESTIONS, ETC.

##### I. Character of Caesar

1. The first impression we get about Cæsar is from the tribunes who describe him as the 'slayer and oppressor of his countrymen,' and as a man ambitious of unlimited authority. When Cæsar himself appears in the following scene he reveals his superstitious disposition. He warns Antony to touch Calpurnia so that she may be rid of her 'sterile curse.' This disposition is further illustrated when after the night of 'prodigies' he orders the priests to offer sacrifice and let him know the result. The conspirators too remark that Cæsar has of late grown superstitious and fear that he may be held back from the Senate by the preternatural occurrences.

2. Another serious weakness revealed by the hero is love of flattery. Decius Brutus almost laughs at him for this—

When I tell him he hates flatterers,  
He says he does, being then most flattered.

And he seems to prove his estimate beyond any doubt when he calls on Cæsar who has determined to absent himself, talks in a most enticing manner of Calpurnia's vision, and persuades him to attend the Senate.

3. Indeed he is singularly vacillating. Calpurnia entreats him not to stir out of the house, but he refuses to stay and declares that the things that threatened him never looked but on his back. He refers with contempt to the common fear of death and concludes that he should be a beast without a heart if he should stay at home for fear. But suddenly he yields to the solicitations of his wife and promises to stay. In the end, however, he is swayed by the cunning and glowing

interpretation of the dream given by Decius and attends the Senate.

4. Such are the mental weaknesses of Cæsar. Nor does he possess a sound body. He himself tells Antony that one of his ears is deaf. Cassius narrates a swimming competition in which Cæsar was about to find a watery grave. He also describes an attack of fever when he had the epileptic fit too, when his eye lost its lustre and his coward lips did from their colour fly. In plainer language Casca says a little later that Cæsar fell down in the market-place, foamed at mouth and was speechless. Brutus confirms that he has the falling-sickness.

5. But though full of defects in body as well as in mind Cæsar is insufferably boastful and arrogant. He is never tired of uttering his name and asserting his unique and almost superhuman strength. When his wife prays that he should not stir out he proudly replies:—

Cæsar shall forth: the things that threaten'd me  
Ne'er look'd but on my back; when they shall see  
The face of Cæsar, they are vanished.

A little later he says that danger knows that Cæsar is more dangerous than he. They are two lions, and he is the elder and more terrible. While commencing the Senate-meeting he asks what is amiss that 'Cæsar and his Senate must redress?' Metellus Cimber begs for the recall of his banished brother and falls upon his knees, only to be spurned like a cur and to be told that 'Cæsar doth not wrong, nor without cause will he be satisfied.' Brutus and Cassius plead for Cimber but Cæsar tells them that he has none of their weak pity, and that he is firm like the northern star. Among all mankind, he adds, there is only one who holds on his rank 'unshaked of motion' and that is he.

6. Thus Cæsar speaks as if he were a mighty god; and it only serves as a ludicrous contrast to his infirmities. But at

the same time it would not be proper to take the infirmities and the arrogant behaviour too seriously. We must not forget that all the people who attack or underrate him are clearly his foes. Cassius is frankly envious, while Casca is not only envious but a cynic who habitually disparages everyone and everything. Moreover even in the envious Cassius's energetic impeachment, there is nothing which really detracts from Cæsar's greatness or worth. Failure in a swimming competition and attacks of epilepsy are the worst things he mentions against the great conqueror and administrator. Then it is doubtful if Cæsar attends the Senate-meeting owing to the flattery of Decius; it is probable that he welcomed it as a fit antidote to his wife's fears. At any rate, though the most tempting flattery is offered to him in the assassination scene he remains strong. Finally his arrogance on the same occasion can be explained and palliated. He does not know that the upright Brutus and the severe Cassius are only playing a part when they beg for a plain injustice. He believes that they behave quite unworthily, is filled with contempt for them, and fancies himself raised above the sphere of ordinary men.

7. Nor does Shakespeare represent Cæsar as a mere bundle of infirmities. He endows him with great merits and recognises his supreme achievements. Cæsar's estimate of Cassius shows him to be particularly shrewd as a judge of men. The manner in which he receives Brutus and the rest who come to fetch him to the Senate illustrates his politeness. He is too magnanimous to suspect those who profess to be his friends and enjoy his hospitality. Above all the fair-minded Brutus speaks of him as an ideal ruler:—

The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins  
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Cæsar,  
I have not known when his affections sway'd  
More than his reason.

Cæsar's adherence to law and justice is best illustrated by his refusal to recall Cimber. He remains firm though even

Brutus kisses his hand and prays for the recall. Finally in the powerful oration of Antony, Cæsar is described in the most glowing terms. Far from being a man of ambition, Cæsar was wholly devoted to the state and the people of Rome. He was 'the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times.' He was the heart of the world, and the world was the forest to 'this hart.' He had crowned himself with 'conquest, glories, triumphs, and spoils.'

8. Thus Shakespeare mentions the merits and achievements of Cæsar as well as he does his weaknesses. No doubt, in the first half of the play, the weaknesses are given undue prominence while the merits almost escape the attention of the reader. Cassius's powerful and elaborate disparagement of Cæsar, and Cæsar's arrogant and boastful utterances impress us much. It is only after the assassination that the drawbacks of Cæsar cease to be mentioned, and that his merits and achievements are described with abundant justice. It is easy to account for such a representation. Had Shakespeare represented Cæsar in all the grandeur of his position and greatness of his character, the figures of the conspirators would have been completely dwarfed. The theme of the play is the tragedy of Julius Cæsar, and the tragedy would become a mere butchery had the victim been depicted without striking drawbacks.

**II. Caesar has become no little of a braggart and has anything but attractive characteristics. He produces the impression of an invalid. He is superstitious. He rejoices in flattery, talks arrogantly, boasts of his firmness and is for ever wavering. Discuss. (U. Q.)**

**III. Caesar is weak, vacillating, failing both in mind and body. He is ironically depicted in his dotage. Discuss. (U. Q.)**

Both these questions have been answered under Question I.

**IV. Examine the statement that Shakespeare's representation of Caesar may be described as rather one-sided or inadequate than untrue. (U. Q.)**

In the first half of the play the delineation of Cæsar is one-sided and unappreciative in the extreme. One of the greatest historical characters in the history of the world is represented as 'pompous, theatrical, subject to epileptic fits, fond of flattery, superstitious and servile' in his attitude to the rabble of Rome. His vanity makes him eager for the empty honour of a kingly crown, but he is so weak that the disapproval of the mob makes him reject the proffered honour. The same vacillating disposition is manifested in the second scene of the Second Act. He first haughtily rejects Calpurnia's advice that he should stay at home, then yields to her solicitations, and finally is persuaded by Decius Brutus to change his mind again and go to the Senate-House. We are even led to doubt his courage. Of course he expresses in bombastic language his contempt of danger, but he immediately afterwards consents to yield to his wife's fears, and determines to send an excuse to the senators.

But this representation is not maintained throughout. In his reception of the conspirators, when they come to his house, he manifests the courtesy and urbanity for which he was famous. On the way to the Senate he postpones the reading of the paper presented by Artemidorus, remarking: 'What touches us ourself shall be last serv'd,' and his noble spirit of self-denial costs him his life. He opens the meeting of the Senate by inviting appeals for redress of anything that has been done amiss. Even Brutus admits that Cæsar, as a ruler, has been guided by reason. Finally, after his death, we hear little of the defects of Cæsar, and see only the nobler side of his character. In his funeral speech particularly, Antony gives a splendid picture of the military glory, public spirit, and benevolence of his dead friend and leader.

Notwithstanding this side of the picture the general impression produced by Shakespeare's representation falls far below

the real greatness of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times. We have to account for this on historical or dramatic grounds. In the first place it must be noticed that it did not suit Shakespeare's design to represent Cæsar in all the grandeur of his historic position and greatness of character. Had he done so, the figures of the conspirators would have been completely dwarfed, and their great deed would have appeared to be a brutal and entirely inexcusable murder. The poet's aim was to produce in the first part of the play an even balance in our sympathies so that they should waver to and fro, inclining alternately to Cæsar and the conspirators. This design is clearly manifested by the skilful management of the scenes in which we are induced at one time to share the anxiety of Calpurnia for her husband, and at another to listen with agonised suspense to the rumours that the air conveys, or seems to convey, to Portia from the Capitol.

Still it might be argued that it was not 'lawful for Shakespeare in a historical play to be guilty of any material misrepresentation of the great facts of history.' But, in fact, Shakespeare is not guilty. The worst that can be objected to the characterization is that it is, as already admitted, one-sided or inadequate. Untrue it certainly is not. Every blemish attributed to Cæsar is either mentioned or suggested in Plutarch. We must not forget that Shakespeare is concerned with the final phase of Cæsar's life and character. It is evident from Plutarch's account and some other works that Cæsar at the end of his life showed signs of deterioration in mind and body. He wanted his words to be regarded as laws. He delighted in seeing his statue carried with the same pomp as the statues of the gods. Sometimes he bared his neck and cried aloud to his friends that his throat was ready to offer to any man that would come and cut it. He was superstitious. Finally, he had all the physical defects and diseases described in the play.

Thus the picture is not untrue, but only one-sided or inadequate.

**V. Consider whether Caesar as represented by Shakespeare deserves his doom. (U.Q.)**

In novels and dramas there usually is a proper relation between the character and destiny of the persons depicted in them. To represent a villain as prospering throughout or a man of virtue as suffering without end, is neither just nor agreeable. Sometimes Shakespeare does not care for poetic justice and may be said to sacrifice virtue for the sake of convenience, but usually he honours merit and virtue and punishes vice and guilt. In his works character is not only action but destiny.

With regard to Julius Cæsar he represents him as falling a victim to a conspiracy. Whether this doom is deserved or not can be decided by studying the characterization of Cæsar.

Reproduce here paras 1 to 5 of the essay on Cæsar's character and add the following:—

Thus Cæsar is represented in very unfavourable lights, but the representation is not maintained throughout. In his reception of the conspirators when they come to his house he reveals the courtesy and urbanity for which he was famous. On the way to the Senate he postpones the reading of the paper presented by Artemidorus, remarking: 'What touches ourself shall be last served', and his noble spirit of self-denial costs him his life. He opens the meeting of the Senate by inviting appeals for redress of anything that has been done amiss. Even Brutus admits that Cæsar, as a ruler, has been guided by reason. Finally, after his death, we hear little of the defects of Cæsar, and see only the nobler side of his character. In his funeral speech particularly, Antony gives a splendid picture of the military glory, public spirit, and benevolence of his dead friend and leader.

Notwithstanding this side of the picture the general impression produced by Shakespeare's representation falls far below the real greatness of Cæsar. And this impression is



quite necessary on dramatic grounds. It renders him worthy of his doom.

**VI. Describe the scene of Caesar's death and show what traits of his character are revealed in it. (U. Q.)**

Cæsar is done to death in the opening scene of the Third Act. As he goes to the Senate-House he is again warned by the soothsayer and Artemidorus, but he pays no heed and takes his place in the Senate. The day's business commences, and according to preconcerted plans Metellus Cimber prefers his suit praying for his brother's recall from banishment. Cæsar indignantly refuses to alter his decree. Brutus and Cassius intercede, but Cæsar answers in an arrogant tone. Casca and the other conspirators then murder Cæsar, and he falls at the base of his rival Pompey's statue. The conspirators proclaim themselves the saviours of Rome, and the city is in a state of confusion. Antony enters and mourns over Cæsar's body, and asks that he too may fall by Cæsar's side and by the daggers that killed Cæsar. Brutus tells him that the conspirators are kindly disposed towards him and grants him permission to speak at Cæsar's funeral. Antony cleverly masks his feelings towards the conspirators, who depart. He is alone and after apologizing to Cæsar's corpse for being 'meek and gentle with these butchers', he prophesies that Cæsar's spirit shall range for revenge, and let slip the dogs of war. He then sends a message to Octavius to keep away from Rome for a time.

Reproduce here para 3 of the substance of Act III, Sc. 1 from the words 'Cæsar's behaviour':—

**VII. Character of Brutus.**

1. Brutus is one of the noblest creations of Shakespeare. He has such a reputation for virtue that Casca says:—

he sits high in all the people's hearts;  
And that which would appear offence in us,

His countenance, like richest alchemy,  
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.

Ligarius speaks of him as the soul of Rome and mentions with joy that like an exorcist he has conjured up his mortified spirit. Antony calls him the angel of Cæsar and honourably distinguishes him from the other conspirators.

2. Brutus's selfless devotion to honour and to country is emphasized at the very outset. He tells Cassius:—

What is it that you would impart to me?  
If it be aught toward the general good,  
Set honour in one eye and death i' the other;  
And I will look on both indifferently.

He wants the gods to 'speed' him only as he loves the name of honour more than he fears death. Finally, he assures Cassius that he would rather be a villager than be a citizen of Rome under the threatening tyranny of Cæsar. His soliloquy in the opening of the Second Act illustrates his character at greater length. He has decided to lead the conspiracy against Cæsar, but he has no personal motives, neither ill-will against Cæsar nor ambition for himself. He sincerely believes that the coronation will make Cæsar a despot, for it is the bright day that brings forth the adder. Rather than allow him to develop into a serpent he thinks it is wise and essential to kill him in the shell.

3. Thus it is for the sake of the country's freedom that he decides to sacrifice Cæsar. This is clearly proved by his sincere affection and regard for Cæsar, which he expresses so often and with such feeling. He praises Cæsar as an ideal administrator:—

The abuse of greatness is when it disjoins  
Remorse from power: and to speak truth of Cæsar,  
I have not known when his affections sway'd  
More than his reason.

He also loves him, and it is really pathetic to behold him struggle between the dictates of public duty on the one hand and the obligations of friendship on the other. He regrets that it is not possible to come by the spirit of Cæsar without destroying the body. He tells his 'gentle friends' that they must kill Cæsar boldly, not wrathfully, carve him as a dish fit for the gods, not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.

4. His devotion to his wife, and his kindness to his servant are also praiseworthy. His treatment of Portia is set off to great advantage by Cæsar's superior airs towards Calpurnia. He cannot bear the suggestion that he treats her as if she were his harlot, and he exclaims:—

You are my true and honourable wife,  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
That visit my sad heart.

A little later he prays to the gods to make him worthy of his noble wife. He treats the page with the consideration of a parent. Lucius speaks of his bounden duty to him, but Brutus nobly replies that he should not urge his duty past his might. He is happy that he enjoys the honey-heavy dew of slumber and gently disengages the musical instrument from his hands.

5. Thus Brutus is the very soul of honour, patriotism, devotion and humanity. But he is absolutely unfit for the practical world, the world of politics especially. He is no true political theorist. He is utterly lacking in practical wisdom. He is a ridiculously poor judge of men and events. He is blind to actual facts. And yet these weaknesses, serious as they are, would not have ruined the conspiracy in case he had not been self-centred, dictatorial, and impracticable. In every instance the wiser policy is placed before him, but it is proudly overruled. Under such circumstances failure becomes inevitable.

6. The part played by Brutus as leader of the conspiracy

can be rapidly sketched by way of illustration. During the discussion that precedes the conspiracy, Cassius points out that Cicero is bound to be a pillar of support to the conspiracy. Casca and Metellus echo his opinion, but Brutus overrules them all. Cicero would surely have proved a worthy match to Antony in oratory. Again Cassius, without being deceived by the apparent frivolity of Antony, realizes him to be a shrewd contriver and urges that he should be put to death with Cæsar. But the superficial Brutus contemptuously underrates his talents, regards him as but a limb of Cæsar which will become impotent on the death of Cæsar. This fatal mistake is brought home to Brutus by Cassius at the end of the play, when they are reaping the consequences of it:—

Flatterers! Now, Brutus, thank yourself:  
This tongue had not offended so to-day,  
If Cassius might have ruled.

Brutus remains tongue-tied. Again it is his want of insight that is responsible for the readiness with which he consents to Antony's addressing the mob. Cassius fully foresees the harm that will result, and does result, from the funeral oration and protests against the permission. But as usual he is overruled, and Antony is allowed to address the people after Brutus shall have stated the reason, which made Cæsar's death necessary. And in his speech to the mob, more than anywhere else, does Brutus betray his ignorance of human nature. 'To the fickle, irrational, passion-swayed mob he thinks it sufficient to urge reason. He will put before them such arguments as he would have put before a knot of philosophers like himself. No appeal is to be made to imagination, no recourse had to eloquence, to animated gesture, or pathos of tone.' The masterly speech of Antony, on the other hand, and its immediate and important effects illustrate the penetrating forecast of Cassius no less than the delusions of Brutus. Finally, the reasons which Cassius advances against Brutus's proposal to march to Philippi are as sound and weighty as the objections of the theorist are hollow and

flimsy. Yet the self-willed Brutus resolves upon the suicidal march, and Cassius laments on the eve of the battle:—

Give me thy hand, Messala :  
Be thou my witness that against my will,  
As Pompey was, am I compell'd to set  
Upon one battle all our liberties.

7. Thus the character of Brutus is an extraordinary combination of moral virtues and mental drawbacks. He is an ideal man but a thorough failure in the practical world. It is no wonder that the conspiracy fails under his leadership.

**VIII. Brutus's simplicity of character makes him an easy victim to designing men. Discuss. (U. Q.)**

Brutus is one of the noblest creations of Shakespeare. But he is rendered unfit for the practical world, for the world of political intrigue especially, by his simplicity. Virtuous himself, he believes everyone of his friends to be virtuous. And his deficiency in insight is so gross that even when proofs follow proofs to disillusion him, he does not even seem to hear or take note of them. The result is that he becomes an easy victim to those who, by their wonderful insight, discover the great weakness in Brutus and determine to play upon it.

Cassius is bent upon forming a conspiracy against Julius Cæsar. He cannot tolerate the sole supremacy of Cæsar in a land where the like of it has never existed. But he realizes that he cannot lead the conspiracy, and that there is only one man whose countenance, like richest alchemy, will change to virtue and worthiness what would appear offence in others. That man is Brutus, and Cassius employs all the skill at his command to make him undertake the responsibility. He appeals to him to think of the dangerous supremacy enjoyed by Cæsar. He calls back to his mind how his worthy ancestors had always championed the cause of liberty and would have brooked the eternal devil to keep his state in Rome as easily

as a king. He points out that he is not wanting in capacity to walk in their glorious footsteps. He regrets that he does not employ his eyes. Finally he pours out into his ear his personal hatred against Cæsar.

Brutus listens to all the outbursts and finally assures Cassius—

.....my noble friend, chew upon this:  
Brutus had rather be a villager  
Than to repute himself a son of Rome  
Under these hard conditions as this time  
Is like to lay upon us.

It is difficult to find a more striking illustration of the simplicity of Brutus. Cassius has persuaded him to believe that his character and position as a Roman patriot require him to put an end to Cæsar's supremacy, and as a result of it he gives an immediate and hopeful assurance. Wrapt in his own meditations, and being always self-centred, he does not ever perceive the unworthy alloys in the motives urged by his friend. Indeed he addresses him, 'noble friend.' The readiness with which he believes in the forged letters is also noteworthy.

Antony succeeds no less in discovering the simplicity of Brutus and availing himself of it. His design is to wreak the worst vengeance on the assassins of the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times. The vengeance is to be secret and not open. He, therefore, pretends to be friends with Brutus and the rest, and requests that he may be permitted to take Cæsar's body to the market-place and speak in the order of his funeral. Prompted partly by his chivalrous confidence and partly by his false conviction that Antony is incapable of any serious purpose or performance, the simple man readily grants the permission. And with what result? The fickle, irrational, and passion-swayed mob is worked up to the height of rebellion and mutiny, and Brutus and Cassius are rid like madmen through the gates of Rome.

Thus both Cassius and Antony play upon the extraordinary simplicity of Brutus. It should however be remembered that this trait does not lower Brutus in the estimation of the reader. It is in fact the outcome of his magnanimity and earns for him the sympathy of the audience.

**IX. "What qualities in the character of Brutus contributed to the overthrow of his cause?" (U. Q.)**

With all his greatness on the moral side Brutus was absolutely unfit for the practical world, the world of politics especially. He was no true political theorist. He was utterly lacking in practical wisdom. He was a ridiculously poor judge of men and events. He was blind to actual facts. And yet these weaknesses, serious as they are, would not have ruined the conspiracy in case he had not been self-centred, dictatorial, and impracticable. In every instance the wiser policy is placed before him, but it is proudly overruled. Under such circumstances failure becomes inevitable.

Reproduce here paras 6 to 7 of the essay on Brutus's Character.

**X. "In the moral elevation of Brutus is the essence of the tragedy." Discuss.**

There is no difference of opinion about the moral elevation of Brutus. Even the inimical Antony bears testimony that he only in a general honest thought and common good to all, made one of the conspirators. No wonder that friends and admirers like Casca say—

O, he sits high in all the people's hearts;  
And that which would appear offence in us,  
His countenance, like richest alchemy,  
Will change to virtue and to worthiness.

The part played by Brutus fully establishes his title to such lofty tributes. It is clear that his sole aim is to serve his

country, to maintain its great traditions, and to uplift its children to the highest ideal of civic virtue. No consideration of fear, not even death, will ever have the power to hold him from the noble path of public duty. He joins the conspiracy out of the best of motives. He knows 'no personal cause to spurn at Cæsar, but for the general.' He sincerely believes that the coronation will convert Cæsar into a despot. Rather than allow him to develop into a serpent, he thinks it his duty to destroy him in the shell. However unsound this may be as an argument, it shows that he has no personal motive in the matter, neither ill-will against Cæsar nor ambition for himself. Far from it, he loves him well, and it is really pathetic to behold him struggling between what he considers to be the dictates of public duty on the one hand, and the obligations of friendship on the other. The courage with which the patriot succeeds in suppressing the emotion of the friend and in steeling himself to sacrifice his 'best lover' is indeed extraordinary.

The moral elevation of the man stands out no less clearly in the discussion he holds with the conspirators. Cassius suggests that they should swear their resolution, but Brutus rejects the suggestion in a speech of splendid eloquence. Soon after Cassius urges that Antony should be put to death with Cæsar, for he is a shrewd contriver. But Brutus refuses to touch anybody except the one who, alas! must bleed for the sake of Roman liberty. He and his confederates should be sacrificers, not butchers.

Thus at every turn the supreme morality of Brutus is emphasized and earns the admiration, almost the reverence, of the reader. Yet, it is this very loftiness on the moral side which is at the bottom of several errors which contribute to the tragedy of his life. 'Conscious of his own integrity he is unable to suspect the presence of lower motives in his associates. He fails to see that his associates who call themselves republicans are in reality oligarchs and have not the slightest thought for the common people.' Under the illusion that they are patriots and men of honour like himself, he combines



with them 'in the perpetration of a treacherous, cowardly and stupid crime which constitutes the tragedy of his career.'

Moral elevation again accounts for the fatal permission to Antony to make the funeral oration. 'His chivalrous soul cannot war with the dead, nor can he refuse to the dead just recognition of his worth.' Moreover Antony has given his word that he is a friend of theirs and has shaken hands with them. It is impossible for Brutus to expect that any Roman who has given his word will prove treacherous.

Thus in the moral elevation of Brutus lies the essence of the tragedy. Towards the end of the play his eyes are opened. 'His imagination had dwelt on the time when his ancestors drove out the Tarquin: now he himself must ride like a madman through the gates.' In other words, he has to admit that the day for liberty is gone and that Cæsarism is an irresistible time-current. What is worse, he realizes that his associates were not the men he supposed. "Their hands are not clean, their hearts are not pure, even his brother Cassius connives at corruption and has 'an itching palm himself.' Surely there are few more pathetic passages than the confession of disillusionment wrung from Brutus by the force of events."

### **XI. Consider whether Brutus is the central figure in *Julius Cæsar*. (U.Q.)**

No one can be regarded as the central figure in a play unless his personality or his fortune is the principal subject on which our interests are centered from the beginning to the end. Considered in this light Julius Cæsar is certainly the central figure in the play named after him. Brutus, though the most prominent and admirable of the characters, cannot be considered the central figure, because his fortune is not the main theme.

Prompted by patriotism and the call of personal and family honour, he leads the conspiracy against Cæsar. Cæsar is one

of his best friends, but the patriot decides to sacrifice the friend, for he sincerely believes that his ambition for the kingly crown is a menace to the liberty of Rome. He profoundly regrets that it is not possible to come by the spirit of Cæsar without dismembering his body, and he tells his followers that they must behave like sacrificers, not like butchers. The plot is fulfilled in the Third Act. Cæsar is shocked at the participation of Brutus in it and yields his life without a struggle. Brutus believes that he has crushed the spirit of Cæsar, but he is disillusioned as event follows event. He finds that the spirit of Cæsar has become invincible.

Such is the part of Brutus in the play, and the importance of the part consists in the light it throws on one of the best and most elaborately drawn characters in all literature. His sense of honour, devotion to Rome, sense of justice, fairness to foes, rectitude, devotion to wife, affection for subordinates and several other virtues are indeed praiseworthy. His unfitness as leader of the conspiracy serves but to add to our sympathy with this morally flawless character. But he is not the central figure of the play.

The central figure is Cæsar. The main theme is the conspiracy against Cæsar, its formation in the first two Acts, its apparent success in the Third Act, and its utter failure in the following Acts. At the opening of the play the citizens appear and rejoice over Cæsar's victory, but the tribunes condemn them, and they vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness. The tribunes describe the ambition of Cæsar and its danger to the freedom of Rome. In the next scene Cassius speaks at far greater length about Cæsar's sovereign sway and the degenerate condition of Rome and her children. He suggests a conspiracy, and Brutus almost agrees to lead it. We naturally centre our anxious attention on the person against whom it is directed. Brutus's final decision to kill Cæsar and the abnormal sights and sounds that precede the ides of March deepen our interest in the fate of Cæsar. We believe with Calpurnia that the heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes. We feel a momentary relief when Cæsar decides not to go to

the Senate, but very soon Decius Brutus persuades him, and Cæsar leaves his wife and home. On the way Artemidorus presents him a letter in the hope of saving him, but Cæsar refuses to read it. We are inclined to conclude that he is destined to die, and our conclusion is soon fulfilled.

The death of Cæsar does not however mark the end of our interest in him. For the spirit of Cæsar continues to remain, and it remains invincible. Mark Antony becomes the avenger of the assassination, and his funeral oration tends to elevate Cæsar into the position of a martyr. The ghost of Cæsar serves as a kind of visible symbol of the vast posthumous power of the dictator. Cassius dies with the words—

Cæsar, thou art revenged.

Brutus, when he looks upon the face of his dead brother, exclaims :—

O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.

Finally, he dies with the words—

Cæsar, now be still:  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

Thus Cæsar is the focus of interest throughout the play. His fate occupies our attention in the first half, his terrible revenge in the second half. As a character he is of course dwarfed by Brutus. While the leader of the conspiracy is depicted at great length and in favourable light, the victim is presented in an onesided and inadequate manner, especially in the first half of the play. But we must not confound character with action, and so far as the action is concerned, Cæsar is the centre.

**XII. What are the ideals and motives that cause Brutus to resolve upon the destruction of Caesar? (U. Q.)**

Reproduce paras 1 and 2 of Answer to Topic 4 in SECTION II, and add the following:—

Brutus also loves Cæsar, and it is pathetic to behold him struggling between what he considers to be the dictates of public duty and the obligations of friendship on the other:—

O, that we then could come by Cæsar's spirit,  
And not dismember Cæsar! But, alas,  
Cæsar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,  
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully;  
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,  
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds.

Finally we have the testimony of Antony himself:—

This was the noblest Roman of them all:  
All the conspirators save only he  
Did that they did in envy of great Cæsar;  
He only, in a general honest thought  
And common good to all, made one of them.

Thus among all the conspirators Brutus stands in splendid isolation. He loves Cæsar as a man, esteems him as an administrator, but fears he is ambitious of the kingly crown and therefore a menace to the liberty of Rome. He believes it is his duty to preserve that liberty, and he sees no means except the destruction or rather the sacrifice of the ambitious Cæsar. He tells the citizens: 'As Cæsar loved me, I weep for him; as he was fortunate, I rejoice at it; as he was valiant, I honour him; but as he was ambitious, I slew him.'

### **XIII. Character of Cassius.**

1. Cassius is one of the prominent and powerful characters in *Julius Cæsar* but it has been his misfortune to be seriously misunderstood and misrepresented. He has been condemned by several critics as the personification of envy and as a typical evil genius. His soliloquy at the end of the second scene of the First Act is cited as a convincing proof of his

base character and role. In that important utterance he is taken as gloating over having wrought the honourable metal of Brutus from its natural disposition. The pronoun 'He' in 'He should not humour me' has been taken as a reference to Brutus, and Cassius is made to mean that Brutus would not be able to play upon and turn him from the bent of his mind.

2. The truth however is that Cassius is not altogether or even mainly composed of envy, and that the soliloquy is capable of a different and favourable interpretation. He regrets the weakness in the character of Brutus and fears that the ambitious tyrant will make capital out of it and make him forget his duty to Rome. There was in fact a popular fear in Rome that Cæsar was humouring Brutus. If we accept this interpretation and study the speeches of Cassius thoroughly and impartially, we are bound to conclude that love of liberty and devotion to Rome are the two predominant motives of Cassius in forming the conspiracy.

3. As he declares again and again liberty is more to him than life itself, and death is preferable to bondage. He is not a little sorry that his countrymen have degenerated into underlings, and that the ancient Republic is in danger of becoming an absolute monarchy. He is supremely happy when he believes that the wretchedness of Rome is at an end and that liberty has been regained. For all ages to come, he declares, the lofty scene of the murder of Cæsar shall be acted over in states unborn and accents unknown.

4. But it is only just to say that the noble motive of liberty is mixed in some measure with the base alloy of personal envy. Cæsar's suspicions about Cassius are largely true. The noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times, and the world-conqueror appears to Cassius to be but an average mortal, full of pitiful infirmities. He refuses to see in him any greatness, and expresses astonishment at the unique place he holds. Again the letters he forges and causes to be thrown are surely to his discredit. In these respects he is a most unfavourable contrast to Brutus.

5. Though morally inferior Cassius easily carries away the palm in practical sagacity. As Cæsar remarks he is a great observer and looks quite through the deeds of men; he has a marvellous insight into men and movements. Brutus on the contrary is easily deceived by the mere surface of men and things, and invariably errs in his judgments. In interpreting Antony's character, Cassius reveals his special merit, and Brutus his fatal defect. Cassius is not deceived by the apparent frivolity of the man. He knows him to be a 'shrewd contriver' and urges that he should be put to death with Cæsar. But Brutus contemptuously underrates his talents and regards him as a mere limb of Cæsar which will inevitably become impotent on the death of Cæsar. It is this want of insight again that is responsible for the readiness with which he consents to Antony's addressing the mob. Cassius fully perceives the harm that will result, and does result, from the funeral oration and protests against the permission. On the whole there is no doubt that the conspiracy would have taken a different turn had Brutus been guided by Cassius. Cassius justly tells Brutus :—

Flatterers ! Now, Brutus thank yourself:  
This tongue had not offended so today,  
If Cassius might have ruled.

Finally Cassius is not only admirable but lovable. At any rate he is loved by everyone of his subordinates and friends. Pindarus would rather be in life-long bondage than obtain his liberty by assisting his master in killing himself. Cassius is filled with shame and sorrow at the thought that he has betrayed Titinius and resolves to die. Titinius declares that the death of Cassius has robbed Rome and life itself of all their splendour and lays down his life. The noble Brutus extols Cassius as the last of all the Romans, and his sorrow is greater than words can tell.

Such are the leading qualities in the character of Cassius. He is a passionate republican and a true patriot. He is not void of envy. His practical wisdom is marvellous. He possesses

in a large measure the qualities that make for popularity among one's friends and subordinates.

**XIV. In a soliloquy Cassius says that Brutus would act nobly, if he were not under the influence of a certain person, and he adds that noble men should ever 'keep with their likes.' Dr. Johnson understood Cassius to be referring to Caesar's influence over Brutus. Some modern commentators understand Cassius to refer to his own influence over Brutus. Give reasons for preferring one view or other. (U. Q.)**

The reference is to the second scene of the opening Act. After listening to Cassius's spirited and elaborate condemnation of Cæsar's authority Brutus takes leave of him with the promise that he would think over the important matter and be prepared to talk about it again on the morrow. Cassius is alone and utters a soliloquy which is mostly devoted to Brutus. It is true that he (Brutus) is noble but it is also true that his honourable temperament may be turned away from its proper course by designing men. Hence it is that noble souls should always associate with lofty natures, for even the strongest of mortals can be influenced for the worse. Cæsar does not like Cassius, but he adores Brutus. If he (Cassius) were Brutus and Brutus Cassius, he should not seduce him.

Such is the substance of the soliloquy. There is considerable difference of opinion as to which is the proper antecedent of the pronoun 'he,' in 'he should not.' Dr. Johnson refers 'he' to Cæsar in which case Cassius's meaning must be that he should not be turned away from the path of honour by Cæsar's blandishments as Brutus is inclined to be. Warburton, another eminent editor of the dramatist, takes a different view and refers 'he' to Brutus. Cassius's meaning would then be, that if Brutus and he were to change places he (Brutus) should not play upon him (Cassius) and turn him from the true bent of his mind. In other words, Brutus cannot seduce Cassius as Cassius is now seducing Brutus. A good

number of modern commentators favour Warburton's interpretation. Wright, Craik, Verity, and Deighton are among them.

It may be urged in defence of Warburton's interpretation that the word Brutus stands nearer to the pronoun than Cæsar, and that Cassius is all through the speech referring to his influence over Brutus. The first point is of little weight and may be set aside. If the second reason is accepted and the interpretation admitted, the character of Cassius is affected by it most seriously. For he must be regarded, on his own confession, as consciously attempting to seduce Brutus from the noble course to which he is naturally disposed, to a course admittedly less noble. In other words, he would be speaking of himself as the evil genius of Brutus. He is made moreover to exult in his power to gull a spirit morally superior to his own. This does not fit in even to the slightest extent with the portrait of Cassius as drawn in the rest of the play. The Cassius of the Fourth and Fifth Acts would have to be regarded as a new and entirely different creation.

Johnson's interpretation, on the other hand, makes the Cassius of the First Act appear in perfect agreement with the Cassius of the last two Acts. By his penetrating insight Cassius realizes the conflict that must have arisen in the mind of Brutus, the conflict between public duty and personal friendship, between loyalty to the state and loyalty to the friend. He fears that the superior call will perhaps be overlooked for the sake of what he considers to be the inferior, and hence his spirited description of what he would do if placed in identical circumstances. He is proudly conscious of his freedom from the dangerous weakness he perceives in his noble friend and relative—the weakness of pliancy.

The justness of Johnson's interpretation is also established by a reference to the original source from which the dramatist drew his material. 'Cassius' friends,' says Plutarch, prayed Brutus to beware of Cæsar's sweet enticements and to fly his tyrannical favours: which they said Cæsar gave him, not



to honour his virtue, but to weaken his constant mind, framing it to the bent of his bow.'

**XV. "We are tempted, at first sight, to suppose that Cassius was merely an ill-tempered man with a personal grudge against Caesar, and that he assumed the airs of a patriot to inveigle others into joining the conspiracy." Discuss. (U. Q.)**

The character of Cassius is first brought home to us by the elaborate speeches he addresses to Brutus during the Lupercalia. Brutus reveals his attitude to the great man by declaring that he is opposed to the idea of crowning him. This is more than enough to encourage Cassius to give expression to his feelings about the supreme authority enjoyed by Cæsar. It is his sincere opinion, however ridiculous it may be, that there is nothing remarkable in Cæsar, and that anybody in the world can be ranked with him. If in spite of this average capabilities he wields sovereign sway it is only because of the degeneracy of the people. He says:—

Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf,  
But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:  
He were no lion, were not Romans hinds.

To illustrate his opinion he gives a few instances. He refers to a swimming competition in which he not only overcame the mighty man but saved him from a watery grave. He alludes to a sorry spectacle presented by him once while he was in Spain and had an attack of fever. He is filled with astonishment, he says, to find that a man of such a feeble temper should so get the start of the majestic world and bear the palm alone.

When Casca gives an account of the Lupercalia celebration he refers to the falling sickness of Cæsar. Brutus receives the account indifferently, but Cassius strikes in:

No, Cæsar hath it not; but you, and I  
And honest Casca, we have the falling-sickness.

Again during the dreadful night, when everybody is filled with terror at the prodigies, Cassius reveals an incredible equanimity and likens the horrible night to Cæsar's unexampled tyranny. He declares that he will commit suicide in case Cæsar is crowned king.

Thus Cassius speaks against Cæsar so often and so passionately that we are tempted to suppose he was an ill-tempered man with a profound personal grudge against Cæsar. But it is only a temptation, and we are bound to overcome it if we study him carefully. There is no gainsaying the fact that Cassius's grievance against Cæsar rests greatly on the fact that 'this man'—

Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
A wretched creature.

But it is unjust to suppose that he is moved solely by personal envy and that his love of liberty and country is mere affectation. Far from being so, love of independence and devotion to Rome are his predominant motives, and their genuineness is beyond question. He declares ever and anon that liberty is to him more than life itself and that death is preferable to bondage. He is extremely sorry that his countrymen have degenerated into underlings, that though they have thews and limbs like their ancestors, their fathers' minds are dead. He cannot tolerate that Rome which has been from time immemorial a republic is fast becoming a detestable monarchy. And what a rapturous delight and triumph does he express at what he seems to regard as the crowning moment of his life—the moment of the death of Cæsar, the great foe to liberty!

How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!

Nothing can be more absurd than to suppose that one who speaks so feelingly is merely playing a part. That Shakes-

peare wants us to regard Cassius in a favourable light is quite clear from the undoubtedly excellent qualities he attributes to him towards the end of the play. And the manner in which the dramatist depicts his death leaves no doubt at all about his standpoint. He slays himself under the mistaken impression that he has sacrificed his friend Titinius. Pindarus is compelled to assist him the suicide, but if the slave had been given the choice he would rather have endured captivity than purchase his liberty at that price. Titinius does not like to live after the sun of Rome is set and heroically follows his master to the grave. Brutus bids farewell to 'the last of all the Romans.'

'I cannot' says Mark Hunter, 'believe that the Cassius whose end Shakespeare has thus surrounded with every circumstance of tragic pity, over whose body so glorious a sacrifice is performed, is the Cassius of the commentators, the mere professional politician, without ideal, without principle, and without scruple.'

## **XVI. Character of Antony.**

The superficial Brutus underrates Antony as a man without serious purpose or performance, but Cassius judges him aright:—

we shall find of him  
A shrewd contriver; and, you know, his means,  
If he improve them, may well stretch so far  
As to annoy us all.

During the first half of the play, however, Antony appears to the reader as he appeared to Brutus. His wisdom is consumed in indolence. Had he been serious and wary he could have foreseen the conspiracy and prevented it. Had he not spent the night previous to the fatal ides in revelry, and had he arrived at Cæsar's before Decius, Cæsar would have carried out his purpose of staying at home, and the conspirators would have been disappointed. But he abandons himself to pleasure.

The true Antony comes to light only after the assassination of Cæsar. He redeems and more than redeems the past by an intense passionate devotion. He admires Cæsar as the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times. His love for him is boundless, and naturally his sorrow for his assassination, and his longing to avenge it are boundless. With wonderful insight and alacrity he determines upon the means he will have to employ. With supreme tact and courage he plays upon the 'butchers,' upon the chivalrous magnanimity of Brutus especially, and obtains permission to address the mob. When alone he utters a terrible prophecy which is fulfilled to the letter. But it is his funeral oration that must be reckoned as his masterpiece. The difficulties he has to overcome might well have unnerved a Demosthenes. He has 'an unpopular cause to defend, an idolized rival to oppose, an ignorant and prejudiced rabble to sway.' In the end he not only overcomes the obstacles but inflames the mob to mutiny and rage against their heroes of an hour ago. He achieves the signal triumph by his perfect mastery of the principles of rhetoric, his thorough insight into the dispositions of men, and his rare capacity to use his talents and acquirements for the attainment of his objects. 'Antony in his passionate energy is magnificent, and we can understand the wild enthusiasm of the citizens who are ready to hear him, to follow him, to die with him. The splendid loyalty of Antony inspires loyalty.

'But when no personal motive for generous action is present, Antony has no principle other than self-interest to guide him, and his character at once becomes as repellant as it was before fascinating.' His conduct in the opening scene of the IV Act fulfils the Third Citizen's observation, 'I fear there will a worse come in his place.' He condemns his nephew to die to please Lepidus for whom after all he has the heartiest contempt. His references to Lepidus lay bare his unscrupulousness. He puts senators wholesale to death. But ere long he has to yield to Octavius the man of Fate. He has all the pains, and the 'peevish schoolboy,' reaps all the gains.

The impression left by Antony's personality 'is on the

whole a pleasing one. The spectacle of a man who, with no pretence to high motives of any sort, at least loves his friend, and honours his memory stands out, in not unfavourable contrast with that of the fastidiously upright moralist who for a principle murders one who loves and trusts him; and the last we see and hear of Antony in the play witnesses to the brighter side of character; his generous welcome of a defeated foe, Lucilius, and his noble and chivalrous tribute to his greatest opponent, Brutus.' (*Prof. Mark Hunter.*)

### **XVII. Give a character sketch of Portia. (U. Q.)**

In Portia, Shakespeare has portrayed an ideal wife thoroughly worthy of being the partner of the 'soul of Rome.' At the very outset she arrests the sympathetic and admiring attention of the reader by revealing a remarkably tender concern for the sorry condition of her husband. On Brutus she has bestowed the entire wealth of her affection, regard, and admiration, and it fills her with not a little distress to see him seriously out of sorts. She naturally longs to know what the mental malady is owing to. Brutus endeavours to explain away, but in vain. 'No' says the ideal wife—

You have some sick offence within your mind,  
Which by the right and virtue of my place  
I ought to know of.

Brutus is clearly moved by the entreaty of his wife, but still he maintains his self-control and is reticent about the 'sick offence.' Then it is that one of the noblest of Portia's utterances, one embodying an ideal conception of a wife's place and function, is expressed. 'Am I your self,' she asks—

But, as it were, in sort or limitation,  
To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,  
And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs  
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,  
Portia is Brutus's harlot, not his wife.

Brutus can no longer contain his love and admiration for the noble woman. He prays to the gods to render him worthy of 'this noble wife' who is as dear to him as are the ruddy drops that visit his sad heart.

The ideal wife is also remarkable for her attempt to live up to her husband, for her endeavour to train herself to his self-mastery. She is only too conscious that she is Cato's daughter, and Brutus's wife. Being so 'fathered and so husbanded' she sincerely believes herself to be immune from the weaknesses incident to her sex. She has also tested her constancy :—

I have made strong proof of my constancy,  
Giving myself a voluntary wound  
Here, in the thigh : can I bear that with patience,  
And not my husband's secrets ?

Thus it is that she gains her point and learns about the conspiracy.

But her success is too much for her ; the load is more than she can bear. She has a great spirit, but it is lodged in a fragile and nervous frame. Just as Brutus is drawn by his political ideal, Portia is drawn by her domestic ideal into a position that overstrains the strength of each. She can endure pain but not suspense. We therefore presently find her all but ruining the conspiracy by her uncontrollable agitation. She may well confess, 'I have a man's heart, but a woman's might.' She sends the boy to the Senate-House without telling him his errand. She meaningly bids him—

take good note

What Cæsar doth, what suitors press to him.

She interrupts herself with the fancy that the conspiracy has begun. Finally, unable to hold out any longer, she retires on the point of fainting. But it is remarkable that even now her love gives her strength to send a cheering message to her lord.

We do not see Portia any more. We are only told by the husband that impatient of his absence and owing to grief that Antony and Octavius have grown strong she turned mad and committed suicide. Well might Cassius repeatedly exclaim on the insupportable and touching loss ! Well might he wonder that Brutus bears with calm the death of one of the choicest of women !

### **XVIII. Character of the Citizens.**

At the very start of the play the common people appear rejoicing over Cæsar's triumph, but the tribunes meet and condemn them as fickle and ungrateful. Even their basest metal is moved, and they vanish tongue-tied in their guiltiness.

But this is only for a while. Casca's account of the Lupercalia should not of course be taken to be absolutely true, for he is a cynic bent on seeing foolery everywhere. But there is some truth in his references to the citizens. A kingly crown was offered by Antony to Cæsar but declined with apparent reluctance. And yet 'the rabblement hooted and clapped their chopped hands and threw up their sweaty night-caps and uttered such a deal of stinking breath that it had almost choked Cæsar.' Casca's description of the citizens' behaviour is even worse when he refers to the recovery of Cæsar from the fainting fit.

Their conduct during the funeral oration of Brutus is quite characteristic. They are so much impressed by the personality of Brutus and so little by his arguments that they propose to make him Cæsar and crown him. 'Let him be Cæsar,' says the Third Citizen. 'Cæsar's better parts shall be crowned in Brutus,' remarks the Fourth Citizen. It is clear from these observations that the people are 'entirely innocent of political principles and have no grievances.' What is more, they worship the great man of the moment and change their favourites with alarming rapidity and completeness. 'Pompey had yielded place to Cæsar.' Cæsar has now been replaced

by Brutus. Yet a few minutes only, and Antony will wipe out Brutus.

Their behaviour during Antony's speech is indeed the most striking illustration of their fickle, irrational character. The Fourth Citizen warns Antony at the outset that he should not speak ill of Brutus. All the citizens agree that Cæsar was a tyrant and that his death was a blessing to Rome. Antony utters but thirty lines and produces a remarkable change in them. They perceive that Cæsar has been wronged, that a worse man will replace him, and that there is not in all Rome a nobler soul than Antony. Yet a few minutes, and they shout out that Brutus and the rest of the conspirators are traitors, villains, murderers. Finally they burn with a spirit of revenge against the champions of liberty of an hour ago and run away to set fire to their houses. Indeed, unable to live in Rome owing to their fury, Brutus and Cassius leave the city in the hottest haste.

In the following scene the mob are represented as actually engaged in their work of destruction. They overwhelm Cinna with a torrent of questions and give him no time to reply. They mistake him to be Cinna the conspirator and want to tear him to pieces. They do not care when the unfortunate man declares that he is the poet. His name is Cinna, and that will suffice. In a word they reveal all the irresponsible fury of wild beasts.

Such is Shakespeare's representation of the mob. 'Their desire to reason and compare arguments is the more amusing because in proof it is so futile.' Their rough humour, and their rude independence of speech and manner however make them entertaining.

**XIX. How are the characters of the principal actors indicated in the scene in which Caesar is murdered? (U. Q.)**

Refer to the substance of Act III, Sc. 1, given in Section II.



**XX. How is the character of Brutus in 'Julius Caesar' brought out by contrast with Cassius ?**

It is usual with dramatists to illustrate and emphasize the merits and shortcomings of their prominent characters by delineating side by side striking foils. We get an example in the representation of Cassius and Brutus in *Julius Cæsar*. But the contrast is not, as it is sometimes thought, between disinterested patriotism and utter selfishness, between ideal nobility and unmixed envy. Cassius has been condemned by several critics as the personification of envy and as a typical evil genius. But if we study carefully we are bound to realize that love of liberty and devotion to Rome are his predominant qualities.

As he declares again and again, liberty is more to him than life itself, and death is preferable to bondage. He is not a little sorry that his countrymen have degenerated into underlings, and that the ancient Republic is in danger of becoming an absolute monarchy. He is supremely happy when he believes that the wretchedness of Rome is at an end and that liberty has been regained. For all ages to come, he declares, the lofty scene of the murder of Cæsar shall be acted over in states unborn and accents unknown.

But it is only just to say that the noble motive of liberty is mixed in some measure with the base alloy of personal envy. Cæsar's suspicions about Cassius are largely true. The noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times, and the world-conqueror appear to Cassius to be but an average mortal, full of pitiful infirmities. He refuses to see in him any greatness, and expresses astonishment at the unique place he holds. Again the letters he forges and causes to be thrown are surely to his discredit. In these respects he is a most unfavourable contrast to Brutus.

It is impossible to find any unworthy sentiment in the utterance of Brutus. Brutus has been most justly praised as the ideal patriot. His ambition is to dedicate his life to the ser-

vice of his country. No consideration of fear, not even death, will have the power to hold him back from the noble path of public duty. He joins the conspiracy out of the best of motives; even the inimical Antony bears fine testimony to this. He has no personal motive, neither ill-will against Cæsar nor ambition for himself. Indeed he loves Cæsar and it is with the greatest difficulty that he decides to sacrifice him for the good of Rome.

Rectitude is indeed the leading note and sublime charm of Brutus's life and character. He does not tolerate anything that is not fully sanctioned by his conscience. He condemns and notes Lucius Pella for taking bribes of the Sardians and does not hesitate to tell Cassius that he is himself guilty of an itching palm. And he nobly declares that he would rather coin his heart and drop his blood for drachmas than obtain from the hard hands of peasants their vile trash by any indirection.

Though morally inferior Cassius easily carries away the palm in the sphere of practical politics. As Cæsar remarks, he is a great observer and looks quite through the deeds of men; he possesses, in short, a marvellous insight into men and movements. Brutus, on the contrary, is easily deceived by the mere surface of men and things, and invariably errs in his estimate of persons as well as of events. In interpreting Antony's character Cassius reveals his special excellence, and Brutus his lamentable and fatal weakness. Cassius is not in the least deceived by the apparent frivolity of the man. He thoroughly knows him to be a 'shrewd contriver' and to possess a great capacity for mischief. Accordingly he urges that Antony should be put to death along with Cæsar. But the superficial Brutus contemptuously underrates Antony's talents, and regards him as but a limb of Cæsar which will inevitably become impotent on the death of Cæsar. It is this want of insight again that is responsible for the readiness with which he consents to Antony's addressing the mob. Cassius fully perceives the harm that will result, and does result, from the funeral orations, and emphatically protests

against the permission. On the whole there is no doubt that the conspiracy would have taken a different turn had Brutus been guided by Cassius. Cassius himself recognizes it and tells Brutus:—

Flatterers! Now, Brutus, thank yourself:  
This tongue had not offended so to-day  
If Cassius might have ruled.

In regard to one respect however Brutus and Cassius offer a delightful resemblance rather than a contrast. It is in regard to the softer side of their characters, in their treatment of those who happen to live with or serve them. They are truly noble and even tender, and they reap their reward in the ideal loyalty of their servants and comrades. Pindarus would rather continue in life-long bondage than be the instrument of his dear master's death. Cassius puts an end to his life when he feels that he has sacrificed Titinius, and Titinius does not like to survive his general. Brutus's treatment of his subordinates is paternal in character. His conduct towards Lucius in Act IV of the play is exceptionally tender. His conduct as a husband is ideal.

To sum up, Cassius is a passionate republican. He is not void of personal envy. His practical sagacity is marvellous. And in the end he earns the sympathy and respect of the reader. Brutus is an ideal patriot, a man of spotless virtue, but lamentably lacking in insight. He always reigns in the admiration of the reader.

**XXI. "The failure of Brutus as a political leader is brought into clear light by the contrast between him and Cassius who is in every way better fitted to be the leader of the conspiracy." Discuss. (U. Q.)**

With all his greatness on the moral side Brutus was absolutely *unfit to take part in the practical world*, in the world of politics especially. He was no true political theorist. He was

utterly *lacking in practical wisdom*. He was a ridiculously *poor judge of men and events*. He was blind to actual facts. And yet these weaknesses, serious as they are, would not have ruined the conspiracy in case Brutus had possessed 'the elementary but saving wisdom which recognises that it may be mistaken.' Indeed he is *self-centred, dictatorial, and impracticable*. As a result of his intellectual limitations he *misconstrues everything* and commits a series of errors. In *every instance* the *wiser policy* is *placed* before him, but in every instance it is proudly and even arrogantly *overruled*. Under such circumstances failure becomes inevitable.

This failure is brought into clear light indeed by the complete contrast between Brutus and Cassius in respect of character. Though morally inferior Cassius clearly carries away the palm in the sphere of practical politics. As Cæsar remarks, he is a great observer and looks quite through the deeds of men; he possesses, in short, a marvellous insight into men and movements. Brutus, on the contrary, is easily deceived by the mere surface of men and things, and invariably errs in his estimate of persons as well as of events. Indeed the conspiracy would have run a different course had Brutus yielded the leadership to Cassius. The contrast in practical sagacity is illustrated at every turn in the play. Brutus declares that Casca has developed into a blunt fellow and is no more the 'quick metal' he was in his school-days. Cassius protests he is still so 'in execution of any bold or noble enterprise,' and his estimate is fully borne out by Casca's part in the play. Cassius realizes that Cicero is bound to be a pillar of support to the conspiracy; Casca and Metellus echo his opinion, but Brutus overrules them all. There is no doubt that Cicero would have proved a worthy match to Antony in oratory. But it is in interpreting Antony's character that Cassius reveals his special excellence, and Brutus his lamentable and fatal weakness. Cassius is not in the least deceived by the apparent frivolity of the man. He thoroughly knows him to be a 'shrewd contriver' and to possess a great capacity for mischief. Accordingly he urges that Antony should be put to death along with Cæsar.

But the superficial, yet self-willed Brutus contemptuously underrates his talents, regards him as but a limb of Cæsar which will inevitably become impotent on the death of Cæsar. This fatal mistake is brought home to Brutus by Cassius at the end of the play, at the time when they are reaping the consequences of it. Cassius tells Brutus:—

Flatterers! Now, Brutus, thank yourself:  
This tongue had not offended so to-day,  
If Cassius might have ruled.

## **XXII. Contrast between Antony and Brutus.**

Antony is first depicted as a lover of pleasure, as one who has no serious purpose in life, and whose wisdom is consumed in indolence. Brutus is the exact opposite. To quote his own words—

I am not gamesome: I do lack some part  
Of that quick spirit that is in Antony.

He takes life most seriously and has a supreme ideal in private as well as in public life. He sits high in all the people's hearts, and that which would appear offence in others is converted to virtue and worthiness by his countenance which acts like richest alchemy.

It is after the death of Cæsar that the true Antony reveals all the sterling virtues and capacities which have been hitherto concealed by his singular love of pleasure. His love and admiration for Cæsar is seen in his sorrow for his assassination and in his profound and burning longing to wreak vengeance on the 'butchers.' With the aid of his unerring insight and foresight he sees that the only way to achieve his purpose is by posing to be on good terms with the assassins. Assuming the exterior of a friend he obtains permission to address the mob. The difficulties he has to face at the beginning are almost insurmountable. But he succeeds not only in surmounting them but inflames the mob to mutiny and rage against the heroes of a few minutes ago.

Brutus murders one who loves and trusts him for the sake of a principle, for the general good of Rome. Due allowance must of course be made to the honesty of his motives, and to his almost pathetic struggle between his love of Cæsar and what he believes to be his public duty. Yet the contrast is striking. Brutus sacrifices his friend. Antony nearly sacrifices himself to avenge the murder of one he loves and admires. Equally striking are Brutus's total deficiency in insight and his ignorance of human nature. The fatal permission he grants to Antony, and the prosaic address he delivers to the mob are clear instances in point. He hardly perceives the tragic meaning of the citizen's remark that 'Cæsar's better parts shall be crowned in Brutus.'

In another respect the palm is entirely with Brutus. At the opening of the Fourth Act, Antony appears in a most unfavourable light. He puts senators wholesale to death, condemns his nephew to die to gratify Lepidus for whom however he has nothing but the heartiest contempt, avails himself of the assistance of Lepidus, and yet speaks of him in the most contemptuous manner when he is away. In a word he is unscrupulous and cruel. The noble nature of Brutus is absolutely free from these base alloys. He has to summon all his stoic philosophy to his assistance before resolving to 'sacrifice' Cæsar for 'the general good of Rome.' He refuses to touch any other person. He condemns and notes Lucius Pella for taking bribes and attacks Cassius himself for his itching palm. Finally, it is impossible for Brutus to treat anybody as Antony treats Lepidus.

Thus, from these points of view the two characters offer a striking contrast. In one respect however they appear to resemble. They give praise where praise is due, be it friend or foe. Antony's final tribute to the supreme nobility of Brutus recalls Brutus's sincere praise of Cæsar as an administrator of justice. The natures of Brutus and Antony are essentially generous and noble.

**XXIII. Discuss the part played by Antony.**

Antony plays a very important part in 'Julius Cæsar' and fully bears out Cassius's prophecy:—

we shall find of him

A shrewd contriver; and you know his means  
If he improve them, may stretch so far  
As to annoy us all.

But in the first part of the play he appears to the reader as he appeared to Brutus. His wisdom is consumed in indolence. Had he been serious and wary, he could have foreseen the conspiracy and prevented it. Had he not spent the night previous to the fatal ides of March in revelry, and had he arrived at Cæsar's house before Decius, Cæsar would have carried out his purpose of staying at home, and the conspirators would have been disappointed. But he abandons himself to pleasure.

The true Antony comes to light only after the assassination of Cæsar. He redeems and more than redeems the past by an intensity of passionate devotion of which in Plutarch there is scarcely a trace. He sincerely and enthusiastically admires Cæsar as the noblest man that ever lived in the tide of times. His love for him is boundless, and naturally his sorrow for his assassination, and his longing to avenge it are boundless. With wonderful insight and alacrity he determines upon the means he will have to employ. With supreme tact and courage he plays upon the 'butchers,' upon the chivalrous magnanimity of Brutus especially, and obtains permission to address the mob. When alone he utters a terrible prophecy which is fulfilled to the letter. But it is his funeral oration that must be, and has always been, reckoned as his masterpiece. The difficulties he has to overcome might well have unnerved a Demosthenes. He has 'an unpopular cause to defend, an idolized rival to oppose, and an ignorant and prejudiced rabble to sway.' In the end he not only overcomes the obstacles but inflames the mob to mutiny and rage against their heroes of an hour ago. He achieves this signal

triumph by means of his perfect mastery of the principles of rhetoric, his thorough insight into the dispositions of men, and his rare capacity to use his talents and acquirements for the attainment of his objects. 'Antony in his passionate energy is magnificent, and we can understand the wild enthusiasm of the citizens who are ready to hear him, to follow him, to die with him. The splendid loyalty of Antony inspires loyalty.'

'But when no personal motive for generous action is present, Antony has no principle other than self-interest to guide him, and his character at once becomes as repellent as it was before fascinating.' His conduct in the opening scene of the IV Act fulfils the Third Citizen's observation. 'I fear there will a worse come in his place.' He condemns his nephew to die to please Lepidus for whom after all he has the heartiest contempt. He puts senators wholesale to death. But the last we see and hear of him witnesses to the brighter side of his character. He generously welcomes a defeated foe, namely, Lucilius, and he pays a noble and chivalrous tribute to his greatest opponent, Brutus.

Thus there is some inconsistency in the part assigned to Antony, though perhaps it is not likely to be perceived except by minute readers. Antony is remembered chiefly for his masterly funeral oration and for the momentous consequences it produced. It is thoroughly to his credit and is an admirable illustration of his character as well as of his talents. His conduct in the Fourth Act is hardly of a piece with the above, but once more, at the end of the tragedy, he rises to a noble height. His praise of Brutus has become immortal.

#### **XXIV. Contrast the speeches of Brutus and Antony in the pulpit in the Forum. (1933)**

Brutus addresses the people and attempts to justify the assassination of Cæsar. He asks first for a silent hearing, respect for his honour, and wise judgment. While claiming that no man has greater love for Cæsar, he admits that his love for



Rome is greater, and that the only question to consider in his act is which of the two alternatives is preferable, slavery with Cæsar alive, or freedom through his death. He has taken the impartial cause as always. Just as he is moved to tears by Cæsar's love, to joy by his good fortune, to feelings of honour for his valour, so impartially he metes out death for his ambition: and none can take offence unless he be even base enough to desire bondage, or uncivilised enough to cease to be a Roman, or vile enough to be unpatriotic. His dignity and his moral weight produce their own effect, and his arguments, he feels sure, are enough to cause him no anxiety at the effect likely to be produced by Antony, who is now to address the populace. He departs with the declaration that as he slew his best lover for the good of Rome, he has the same dagger for himself when it shall please his country to need his death.

Brutus's funeral speech throws great light on his character. Nowhere else does he give so complete an illustration of his most serious defect, his thorough ignorance of human nature. 'To the fickle, irrational, passion-swayed mob he thinks it sufficient to urge reason. He will put before them such arguments as he would have put before a knot of philosophers like himself. No appeal is to be made to imagination, no recourse had to eloquence, to animated gesture, or pathos of tone. Justice, to himself the highest law, the one sufficient principle, the ultimate guide of action, must be equally powerful with the mob; and concise logic the fittest instrument for his purpose.' The masterly speech of Antony and its immediate and important effects find in fact the completest contrast in the cold reason of the stoic philosopher and the poor response it evokes.

When Antony begins to speak he is warned by the people 'to speak no harm of Brutus,' nor to praise Cæsar, for 'Cæsar was a tyrant.' Under such adverse circumstances none but an orator of wonderful tact can hope to succeed, and it is astonishing indeed that Antony, the man underrated by Brutus as but a limb of Cæsar, acquits himself beyond all ex-

pectations. First he insinuates himself into the good graces of his hearers by telling that his object is to bury Cæsar, not to praise him. Then he proceeds to speak on the charge of ambition brought by Brutus against Cæsar. He does not bluntly deny the charge or appeal to mere reason. Instead he refers to several plain facts which illustrate the selfless patriotism of Cæsar. For example, he mentions how the great man repeatedly refused the kingly crown which was offered on the Feast of the Lupercal. Even the Fourth Citizen is convinced that the charge of ambition is false.

Antony can now afford to talk of the conspirators in a less guarded manner than hitherto. His aim is to stir the mob to mutiny and rage against Cæsar's assassins, and hence he ironically tells the people that he will not rouse their indignation lest he should do Brutus wrong and Cassius wrong, who are 'honourable men.' He also mentions quite abruptly the will left by Cæsar and skilfully refers to the provision for the benefit of the common people. This operates like magic and regenerates the affection and regard the people once cherished for the great man. As a natural consequence they grow furious against those who have assassinated the object of their love and respect, and when Antony applies to them the stock epithet 'honourable' they cry forth—

They were traitors: honourable men!  
They were villains, murderers.

Before reading out the will Antony gives yet another instance of his supreme tact. He raises the mantle from the body of Cæsar, refers to his glorious career of conquest, and laments that one so renowned is at present unhonoured and unsung. He finishes by taking away the mantle completely and exhibiting the mangled body of the conqueror, the patriot, and the people's friend. The savage cry that proceeds at once from the audience illustrates the effect of the display:—

Revenge! About! Seek! Burn! Fire! Kill!  
Slay! Let not a traitor live!

The fury of the people is such that they want to go away instantly and begin the work of revenge. Antony reminds them of the will and reads out the liberal provisions made by Cæsar for the advantage of the common people and their heirs. Filled with gratitude, affection and grief, the people carry away the body of Cæsar with the declaration:—

We'll burn his body in the holy place,  
And with the brands fire the traitors' houses.

Antony's speech is thus a masterpiece exhibiting the power of oratory when wielded by one who is fully aware of the rules of rhetoric, of the character and dispositions of men, and competent to use this mighty power for the attainment of his wishes. It is impossible to find a greater contrast to the speech of Brutus, a speech lamentably lacking in imagination and eloquence, in gesture and pathos of tone, and appealing to mere reason in concise language.

### **XXV. What part is played by women in the play? (1933)**

There are two women characters in the play, Portia and Calpurnia, the devoted wives of Brutus and Cæsar respectively. Neither of them can be said to affect the plot, but both, especially Portia, have considerable importance in regard to characterization. Portia is the ideal wife in Shakespeare; Brutus is her joy and pride, nay her lofty pattern. Calpurnia is equally devoted to Cæsar but she is not so intimate with her lord, she does not enjoy so much of his confidence as Portia enjoys that of Brutus. There is a charming equality between Brutus and Portia, which we fail to see in the relations of the other pair:

Portia begins her role by expressing the deepest concern for her husband. His behaviour has been extremely restless; she is certain that he has some sick offence within his mind and this causes her intense anxiety:—

It will not let you eat: nor talk, nor sleep,  
And, could it work so much upon your shape

As it hath much prevail'd upon your condition,  
I should not know you, Brutus.

She wants to know what the sick offence is, but Brutus refuses to disclose it. He endeavours to keep her off by saying that he is not well in body. But Portia is too shrewd and strong to accept this false explanation, and she appeals to him to grant her due rights as wife, and to treat her with his wonted love and affection. She falls upon her knees and asks—

Am I your self  
But, as it were, in sort or limitation,  
.....Dwell I but in the suburbs  
Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,  
Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.

Brutus can endure no longer, and he acknowledges that she is his true and honourable wife, and is as dear to him as are the ruddy drops that visit his sad heart. Portia protests that she is not to be treated as an ordinary woman. She is the child of Cato and the wife of Brutus, and she has made strong proof of her constancy by giving herself a voluntary wound. This appalling information heightens Brutus's regard, and he prays to the gods that he must be worthy of his noble wife.

In this mood of love and admiration, Brutus reveals to Portia the conspiracy planned against Cæsar. But he commits a mistake, for from that time onward, and especially at the time of the meeting of the Senate, Portia is in a state of intense agitation. She exclaims:—

O constancy, be strong upon my side;  
Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue!  
I have a man's mind, but a woman's might.

She almost faints on account of her agonising anxiety about the proceedings at the Senate meeting.

We do not meet her any more. We are only told in Act IV that impatient of the absence of her husband and owing to grief that Antony and Octavius have made themselves strong, she grew mad and committed suicide. Cassius repeatedly exclaims on the insupportable and touching loss and really marvels at the stoic endurance of Brutus, for Portia is one of the choicest specimens of the tender sex.

Such is the part of Portia. She is an ideal wife and the high-souled Brutus justly admires and honours her. She forms the unfortunate ambition of cultivating a strength impossible to her sex and inconsistent with her character, and she meets with a tragic death. Her life seems to illustrate the revenge that nature takes upon women who attempt to be stoic philosophers.

The part played by Calpurnia is comparatively less important and impressive. The scene in which she persuades Cæsar not to attend the meeting of the Senate is a contrast to that in which Portia appeals to her husband to disclose the secret of his bosom. Calpurnia is full of concern, but Cæsar hardly minds her feeling and talks as if he were a superhuman being free from all fear and danger. He almost laughs at the genuine fears of his wife, and disparages her counsel as that of a coward. For a time indeed he yields to her solicitation to stay at home, but after listening to Decius he changes his mind, and the words he utters to her at parting are hardly complimentary:—

How foolish do your fears seem now, Calpurnia !  
I am ashamed I did yield to them  
Give me my robe, for I will go.

Thus the part of Calpurnia only tends to heighten our admiration for Portia and our prejudice against Cæsar. Portia's devotion to her husband and Brutus's noble recognition of it add to our regard for the great man.

## **XXVI. Motives of the conspirators in joining the plot.**

Brutus leads the conspiracy out of the highest motives. He

knows no 'personal cause to spurn at Cæsar, but for the general.' He believes that the coronation will convert him into a despot, and he decides to destroy the serpent in the shell. However unsound this may be as an argument, it clearly shows that he has no personal motive, neither ill-will against Cæsar nor ambition for himself. Far from it he has a great regard for him as a public servant :—

The abuse of greatness is, when it disjoins  
Remorse from power: and, to speak truth of Cæsar,  
I have not known when his affections sway'd  
More than his reason.

He also loves him, and it is pathetic to behold him struggling between what he considers to be the dictates of public duty on the one hand, and the obligations of friendship on the other :—

O, that we then could come by Cæsar's spirit  
And not dismember Cæsar! But, alas,  
Cæsar must bleed for it! And, gentle friends,  
Let's kill him boldly, but not wrathfully,  
Let's carve him as a dish fit for the gods,  
Not hew him as a carcass fit for hounds:

Finally, we have the testimony of Antony himself that 'He only, in a general honest thought and common good to all, made one of them.'

None of the other conspirators can be credited with such nobility of purpose. It is true that an inordinate love of independence and a passionate devotion to Rome are manifested by Cassius. Liberty is more to him than life: death is preferable to bondage. He will commit suicide rather than live to witness the crowning of a dreadful tyrant. He is sincerely sorry that his countrymen have degenerated into underlings, that though they have thews and limbs like their ancestors, their fathers' minds are dead. But it must also be noted that Cassius's grievance against Cæsar rests in no small measure on the fact that 'this man'—

Is now become a god, and Cassius is  
A wretched creature.

Indeed he pours out without reserve into Brutus's ear his personal animus against Cæsar. He sees in the mighty conqueror and the excellent administrator nothing to admire, far less to love. His description to Casca really baffles one's understanding :—

A man no mightier than thyself or me  
In personal action, yet prodigious grown  
And fearful, as these strange eruptions are.

On the whole Cassius's talk bears out the truth of Cæsar's penetrating remark :—

Such men as he be never at heart's ease  
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,  
And therefore they are dangerous.

Thus Cassius's motives of what he regards to be public interest are mixed with and debased by this unworthy alloy of personal jealousy.

'The lesser member of the conspiracy whom Cassius's skill and energy have brought together, are actuated by their hatred of the rule of a single person whom they cordially detest, as lesser men detest those in whose greatness their own individualities are dwarfed and overshadowed.' They have nothing but contempt for the common people. Casca's language is even offensive. "The people are 'the rabblement,' the 'tag-rag,' the 'common herd' of whom 'no heed is to be taken', rejoicing in 'chopped hands,' 'sweaty night-caps' and other things even less attractive."

Thus Brutus's motives are of the highest order though we have also to admit that they are vague and ill-defined. Cassius's motives are mixed, while those of the others are absolutely tainted with jealousy.

**XXVII. What ends are served by the introduction of supernatural occurrences into 'Julius Caesar'?**  
(1926)

The supernatural is one of the legitimate devices of dramatic art, and the poet employs it to intensify and illuminate human action, not to determine it. The abnormal disturbances of Nature and the strange sights seen on the night before the ides of March, and the appearance of the ghost of Cæsar before Brutus, constitute the supernatural in *Julius Cæsar*.

It was a night marked by unexampled thunder and lightning. The 'sway of earth shook like a thing infirm.' The tempest, the like of which had not even been heard of by anybody, dropped fire. A lion was found wandering loose in the streets. An owl settled at noonday above the great market-place. A slave's hand burst into flames, but when he cast the flames from him the hand was found to be unhurt. A lioness whelped in the streets. The graves were shaken. Men swore to hearing noises of battle, the neighing of horses, the groans of dying men, the squealing of ghosts among the voices of the storm.

Such are the accounts given by Casca and Calpurnia. Moreover Calpurnia dreamt a horrible dream and repeatedly cried out in her sleep, 'Help, ho! they murder Cæsar!' Cæsar vividly describes the entire dream:—

she saw my statue,  
Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans  
Came smiling and did bathe their hands in it.

It is essential to understand the purpose for which the tempest and the portents have been introduced. They become appropriate as a dramatic background to an agitated passion in the scenes themselves. The conspiracy against Cæsar is shown as gathering force against the storm. The mur-



der of Cæsar is foreshadowed in Calpurnia's dreams. Casca's interpretation of the abnormalities sums up the impression that would be produced upon the audience:—

When these prodigies  
Do so conjointly meet, let not men say  
'These are their reasons: they are natural:'  
For, I believe, they are portentous things  
Unto the climate that they point upon.

'They are a vague suggestion of Nature's mysterious foreknowledge of coming events in the world of man.'

The ghost of Cæsar appears before Brutus at Sardis and fills him with terror:—

Art thou.....  
.....some devil  
That makest my blood cold and my hair to stare?

The ghost replies that it is his (Brutus's) evil spirit and vanishes after telling him that he will see it at Philippi. Finally we are told by Brutus in the last Act, when 'that noble vessel is full of grief':—

The ghost of Cæsar hath appear'd to me  
Two several times by night; at Sardis once,  
And this last night here in Philippi fields:  
I know my hour is come.

The ghost of Cæsar is highly important, almost indispensable to the latter part of the play. It emphasizes the continued influences, after death, of the power of Cæsar's personality. It serves as a kind of visible symbol of the immense posthumous power of the dictator. Cassius dies with the words:—

Cæsar, thou art revenged.

Brutus, when he looks upon the face of his dead brother, exclaims:—

O, Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet!

Finally Brutus himself dies with the words:—

Cæsar, now be still:  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

**XXVIII. What is the value of portents and omens in 'Julius Caesar'? Compare the tone of Casca when he describes the games with the tone of his speeches in the 'tempest-dropping fire.' (U. Q.)**

[The first part of the question has been dealt with in connection with the previous question. The second part alone is answered below.]

In truth Casca is of an excitable and impulsive temperament. He is particularly impressionable, and that is the reason why he is chosen to relate the portents. But it is his humour to pretend to be the exact opposite. He is "a professed cynic, a man whose affectation it is to disparage everything and who is determined to see 'foolery' everywhere." This affectation is fully illustrated in his account of the Lupercalia. He begins by saying that he can as well be hanged as tell the manner in which the crown was offered to Cæsar, for it was, he says, mere foolery. He underrates Cæsar, speaks of Cicero without any regard, and gives the most damaging account of the mob.

But the 'tempest-dropping fire' exposes the professed cynic. Now we find him in a state of 'nervous excitement, unmannered by superstitious terror, with his sword drawn against an imaginary lion, unbosoming his fears and apprehensions to the same Cicero whom a little before he had spoken of with disdain.'

**XXIX. Quote and discuss any examples of dramatic irony in 'Julius Caesar.' (U. Q.)**

Dramatic irony is a particularly effective device, and it consists in the difference between the facts as known to the

audience and as imagined by the characters of the play or by some of them. Thus, in *Julius Cæsar*, the apparent satisfaction with which Cæsar listens to Decius's skilful explanation of Calpurnia's dream is charged with irony. The audience are aware of Decius's open avowal that Cæsar can be easily swayed by flattery and of his promise to bring him to the Senate by employing that subtle weapon. When, therefore, Cæsar goes back upon his word to his wife and starts for the Senate, the audience cannot help feeling that Cæsar is courting his doom. In the same scene again, when Brutus and the rest call on Cæsar to follow him to the Senate, he behaves to them with a royal urbanity and tells them:—

Good friends, go in and taste some wine with me:  
And we like friends will straightway go together.

Brutus himself brings out the irony in the situation in an aside:—

That every like is not the same, O Cæsar,  
The heart of Brutus earns to think upon!

Irony of situation 'often takes the form of attributing to a character a bold, self-confident tone just when he is, as the audience know, on the brink of some catastrophe.' *Julius Cæsar* affords a most striking illustration of this feature. The audience are aware that during the Senate meeting on the ides of March, Cæsar is to be done to death. They perceive a striking irony in the behaviour of Cæsar during the meeting. He triumphantly tells the soothsayer that the ides of March are come and gets the significant reply that they are not gone. He rejects Artemidorus's letter with the proud declaration, 'What touches us ourself shall be last served.' During the meeting, Metellus prays for the recall of his brother and the petition is supported by Brutus, Cassius and the rest. The speeches in which Cæsar rejects the suit are charged with the greatest irony. Not knowing that the whole group is merely playing a part and that in a few minutes he is to be done to death by them, he fancies himself raised above the sphere of

ordinary men. He does not suspect that his fixed, constant and unshaken quality is immediately to be exposed to the rude change of death. Hence his arrogant language :—

I am constant as the northern star,  
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality  
There is no fellow in the firmament.

Often the irony is verbal. 'A character will frequently use words which, besides the obvious meaning, have a second meaning in relation to what will happen later. If the speaker is aware of this second meaning, he is consciously ironical; but the dramatic effect is more striking where he is not, for it then seems as if the words were put into his mouth by a power outside himself. Antony is consciously ironical with the citizens when he pretends to be afraid of a riot even while he suggests it, or poses as the plain blunt man without oratorical gifts, or appears unwilling to read the will which he had brought with him for the purpose. On the other hand, when one of the citizens expresses a fear that there will come a worse in the place of Cæsar, he does not suspect that the worse man will be Mark Antony whom he so much admires. Nor does Brutus suspect what will be the power of Cæsar's spirit, to 'come by which he so unwillingly helped to dismember Cæsar.'

**XXX. The play, 'Julius Caesar' is pervaded by the notion of irresistible destiny. (U. Q.)**

One of the striking aspects of Shakespeare's '*Julius Cæsar*' is the pervading sense of the power of destiny. In the earlier scenes we feel that 'the Fates with traitors do contrive.' As usual Destiny gave warning, and at first in that small and seemingly casual voice which men disregard at the time and remember afterwards. During the Lupercalia the soothsayer bids Cæsar 'Beware the ides of March', but Cæsar has begun to fancy himself almost a god and naturally dismisses the fellow as a dreamer. Again the heavens themselves blaze forth the tragedy. Neither heaven nor earth are at peace.

Strange and horrible sights present themselves. Calpurnia dreams a fearful dream. The augurers send word to Cæsar that he should not stir forth.

Though Cæsar is not perturbed by these abnormal happenings, at least to such an extent as to think of absenting himself from the meeting of the Senate, he resolves to stay at home in compliance with the prayer of his wife. He decides to send word to the Senate through Antony that he is not well. But as ill-luck would have it, Decius arrives at the juncture and prevails upon Cæsar to follow him to the Senate. Artemidorus meets him on the way and presents a letter urging that it concerns him (Cæsar). The letter contains a definite warning to the dictator against the conspirators. But Cæsar refuses to take the letter for the very reason that it concerns him intimately.

All these circumstances clearly prove that the Fates with traitors do contrive. Cæsar's assassination seems inevitable and hence it is that not one of the several warnings is heeded.

But the cause of the conspirators fares no better. They achieve nothing by assassinating Cæsar; they only ruin themselves. In the later scenes of the play the genius or spirit of Cæsar, *i.e.*, the spirit of monarchy becomes a powerful, an irresistible, factor. Mention is made of Cæsar's spirit nearly twenty times. The ghost of Cæsar which appears on the night before the battle of Philippi serves as a kind of visible symbol of the vast posthumous power of the dictator. Cassius dies with the words:—

‘Cæsar, thou art revenged.’

Brutus, when he looks upon the face of his dead brother, exclaims :—

O Julius Cæsar, thou art mighty yet  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.

Finally Brutus dies with the words:—

Cæsar, now be still:  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

Thus the spirit of Cæsar controls the action of the play thoroughly.

### **XXXI. Who is the Hero of the play?**

*Or*

**Examine the appropriateness of the title of the play.**  
(U. Q.)

It may seem curious that the play has been called after a character who passes away even in the midst of its progress and who seems insignificant in comparison with some other characters, notably Brutus. But Cæsar is, from beginning to end, the central figure or the setting of the play. He occupies the serious thoughts of the more important characters, and the external action of the play is chiefly directed towards or against him. The conspirators succeed in destroying merely the body of Cæsar. In the latter half of the play, the spirit of Cæsar becomes a most powerful factor, and the dreadful prophecy of Antony is thoroughly fulfilled.

The play opens with the appearance of the citizens in a holiday mood. They have converted a working day into a holiday because Cæsar is returning to Rome in triumph. The tribunes hate Cæsar, and they rebuke the labourers for their fickle and thoughtless behaviour in rejoicing over the defeat and destruction of the great Pompey's blood. Stung by this attack the citizens vanish. In the next scene Cæsar himself appears, presiding over the Lupercal celebration. He speaks only a few words, but they suffice to reveal some aspects of his character, particularly his arrogance. But we come to know a great deal about him from the elaborate conversation between Cassius and Brutus. It is clear that Brutus has

already begun to view with fear and suspicion the growing power of Cæsar. When he hears some shouts from the throng he is afraid that his worst fear is fulfilled and that Cæsar is crowned king. Cassius is far more plain in his attitude to Cæsar; indeed he has determined to kill that foe to liberty, and he wants Brutus to lead a conspiracy. Cassius employs his utmost skill to appeal to the honour and patriotism of his brother-in-law. This is followed by Casca's account of the offer of the crown, and of Cæsar's contemptible behaviour during the occasion. To Cassius, the very signs of the thunder-storm are but means to warn Romans against their monstrous state, and their Rome, with room in it but for only one man. He tells Casca:—

Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol.

Thus, in the First Act, Cæsar is the setting or the foil. He becomes even more so in the one that follows. Brutus has decided to lead the conspiracy, and in a soliloquy he explains his motives against Cæsar. Soon after there is a meeting between him and Cassius and the rest, and several important matters regarding the plot are discussed and settled. Meanwhile Carpuia dissuades her lord from attending the meeting of the Senate, but Cæsar answers with an arrogance which looks almost like an irony of fate. The impression is strengthened by altering his mind at the end, and by his departure for the place of meeting. Soon after, at the commencement of the Third Act, he is murdered, and Brutus utters forth in triumph:—

Stoop, Romans, stoop,  
And let us bathe our hands in Cæsar's blood  
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:  
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,  
And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,  
Let's all cry 'Peace, freedom and liberty!'

After the assassination the genius or spirit of Cæsar, that is, the spirit of monarchy becomes a powerful, nay an irresistible factor. Mention is made of Cæsar's spirit nearly twenty times. The ghost of Cæsar which appears on the night before the battle of Philippi serves as a kind of visible symbol of the vast posthumous power of the dictator. Cassius dies with the words:—

Cæsar, thou art revenged.

Brutus when he looks upon the face of his dead brother, exclaims:—

O Julius Cæsar! thou art mighty yet:  
Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our swords  
In our own proper entrails.

It is remarkable that Brutus's words bear a close parallel to the dreadful prophecy uttered by Antony over Cæsar's dead body:—

Cæsar's spirit ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice  
Cry 'Havoc,' and let slip the dogs of war.

Finally Brutus dies with the words—

Cæsar, now be still:  
I kill'd not thee with half so good a will.

Thus the spirit of Cæsar controls the action thoroughly. And the title is quite appropriate. As a character Brutus is certainly far more prominent than Cæsar, but he is not the central figure.



